

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT
OF
THOMAS CARLYLE

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"Do make religion your great study, Tom; if you repent it, I will bear the blame forever."

(From a letter written by his mother, April 10, 1819.)

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INTRODUCTION

In the application of titles to the great literary figures of the 19th century, there is but one which fitly describes the character of Thomas Carlyle-- that of seer. There is a striking resemblance between the writings of the temperamental Scottish moralist and the rhapsodies of the stern prophets of Israel. Amos and Carlyle are at one in condemning the indolent rich for "selling the needy for a pair of shoes." They share a common attitude in their bitter denunciation of an institutionalized religion which has hid the light of spiritual power to the point of extinction under the bushel of ecclesiastical formalism. Carlyle, though he turned away from the gates of a clerical career, became the outstanding religionist of his century, touching liberal thinkers in all fields of social endeavor-- those of the church, together with those of the political arena. He became the seer not only of Britain but also of the rapidly growing civilization of the New World.

There are many specialized studies which have been made of Carlyle. He was most prolific in his writings and not at all confined to the narrow limits of a particular field. Literary criticism, essay writing, history, philosophy, biography, the interpretation of society, ethics, and religious thought-- well qualified in each of these, he is unsurpassed when considered in the light of his versatility.

A review of his work, however, reveals that there is one fundamental aspect of Carlyle's mind which provides the

canto firmo for them all. Only such terms as spiritual power, religious conviction, the search for the eternal, can be used, though inadequately, to describe that aspect. Because it is always a valuable as well as fascinating study to seek out the driving forces of men (although it is blasphemous to do so without reverence for those forces), and because it is essentially in them that the permanence of any man's influence lies, the writer has selected, as his particular field of inquiry, the religious thought of Carlyle. He realizes that this is no small task, since it possesses infinite ramifications. It is his purpose only to delineate the major ideas of Carlyle, and to discover both their sources and their relation to his religious and ethical thought, his interpretation of history, and his world-view in general.

No writer ever conducted a literary career with a more urgent sense of a religious mission. The passion to convert men, and to save them from the materialism and utilitarianism which had nearly engulfed himself, possessed him as it only rarely does even the evangelists of the Christian message.¹ The same devotion which, but for the peculiar failure of the church in the time of his youth to meet the attacks of the Age of Reason, would have poured itself out in the pulpit, was rechanneled into his books. There, as readers, we are addressed personally by his unique method of direct exhort-

1. In a letter to his mother, January 2, 1827, he wrote, "You must accept this 'Life of Henry Martyn' as a new year's gift from me; and while reading it believe that your son is a kind of missionary in his way-- not to the heathen of India, but to the British heathen, an innumerable class whom he would gladly do something to convert.." (Froude, i, p. 378.)

ation-- a literary style comparable only to the best of preachers and the prophets of the Old Testament.

Required reading for those who wish to rediscover the secret of Carlyle's "literary priesthood" is a few pages of his first original book, The Life of Friedrich Schiller, published in 1825.¹ There he takes pains to translate two paragraphs from the German romantic writer's Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen-- a passage which was so important to him that he told Jane Welsh she must get it by heart and repeat it every day along with her devotions! "It is my creed, expressed with Schiller's eloquence."² Here we find the justification for the harsh behavior of the 19th century's Diogenes, for the uncompromising tone of the admonitory utterances he addressed to the optimistic Age of Liberalism. "'The Artist, it is true,' says Schiller, 'is the son of his age; but pity for him if he is its pupil, or even its favourite! Let some beneficent Divinity snatch him when a suckling from the breast of his mother, and nurse him with the milk of a better time; that he may ripen to his full stature beneath a distant Grecian sky. And having grown to manhood, let him return, a foreign shape, into his century; not, however, to delight it by his presence; but terrible, like the Son of Agamemnon, to purify it...

"'But how is the Artist to guard himself from the corrupt-

1. See pp. 199-202.

2. Love Letters, ii, p.93.

ions of his time, which on every side assail him? By despising its decisions. Let him look upwards to his dignity and his mission, not downwards to his happiness and his wants. Free alike from the vain activity, that longs to impress its traces on the fleeting instant; and from the discontented spirit of enthusiasm, that measures by the scale of perfection the meagre product of reality, let him leave to common sense, which is here at home, the province of the actual; while he strives from the union of the possible with the necessary to bring out the ideal. This let him imprint and express in fiction and truth, imprint it in the sport of his imagination and the earnest of his actions, imprint it in all sensible and spiritual forms, and cast it silently into everlasting Time.'"

Commenting on Schiller, not so much as an individual genius, as the type of what all literary men should be, Carlyle declares, "Literature was his creed, the dictate of his conscience; he was an Apostle of the Sublime and Beautiful, and this his calling made a hero of him." (Thus, early in 1825, we see the embryo of Carlyle's formulation of the Calvinistic idea of the "called" as elect "heroes".)¹ "... (G)enuine Literature includes the essence of philosophy, religion, art; whatever speaks to the immortal part of man. The daughter, she is likewise the nurse of all that is spiritual and exalted in our character. The boon she bestows is truth ... of moral feeling, truth of taste, that inward truth in its

1. See below, pp. 236ff and 311. ✓

thousand modifications, which only the most ethereal portion of our nature can discern... The treasures of Literature are thus celestial, imperishable, beyond all price: with her is the shrine of our best hopes, the palladium of pure manhood; to be among the guardians and servants of this is the noblest function that can be intrusted to a mortal. Genius, even in its faintest scintillations, is 'the inspired gift of God'; a solemn mandate to its owner to go forth among his brethren, which the heavy and polluted atmosphere of this world is forever threatening to extinguish. Woe to him if he turn this inspired gift into the servant of his evil or ignoble passions; if he offer it on the altar of vanity, if he sell it for a piece of money!"

These are words which are comparable only to the commission of Isaiah in the Temple or the solemn charge to ministers upon ordination to the service of God. Only by comprehending their import--with especial attention to Schiller's call to the literary man, "terrible, like the Son of Agamemnon", to purify his age-- can we understand the prophetic character of Carlyle's books, and avoid the mistake of attributing his "diatribes" to the "splenetic eccentricities of an old man." Robbed of the complacency which belonged to the time of our grandfathers, we are perhaps, today, more receptive to Carlyle's sharp utterances, and less inclined to call them "diatribes".

The keys to Carlyle's character are to be found in the ex-

tremities of the "old-fashioned" world-view of the Calvinists, with their spiritual perspective that reached up to heaven and down to hell. They are reverence and defiance, the only two responses which he deemed appropriate to good and evil, divided as they are from each other by an "infinite difference". He humorously referred to those who were less rigorous than himself, such as Leigh Hunt, as members of the "Amalgamation of Heaven and Hell Society".

The two characteristic moods of reverence and defiance show Carlyle to be what is popularly known today as an "existential thinker". He is at every point of his thought existentially involved and personally committed. He was alike hostile to the tentativeness of the sceptic and the logical method and objectivity of the rational philosopher. "Reason" came to mean something entirely different from the reason of the philosophers. Both in his attitude toward persons, and in his religion, he is completely "existential".¹ This is his greatness, rather than the greatness of originality. It is the greatness of intensity, rather than that of the discovery of ideas.

The stress upon heroes and hero-worship derives not from an apotheosis of power, but from Carlyle's intensely personal approach to history. He is interested in men, not movements. "History is the essence of innumerable Biographies."² As a

1. Cassirer says of him, "He is a classical witness to that philosophical attitude that was later styled existential philosophy. We find in him all the characteristics of the type of thought represented by Kierkegaard and his attack against the Hegelian system. We know very little of a thinker, he declares, as long as we know only his concepts. We must know the man before we can understand and appreciate his theories." (The Myth of the State, Oxford, 1946, p.197.)
2. "Biography", Essays, iii, p.46.

historian, he is miles away from the abstract scholar charting political currents and economic tides with little attention to the free, all-but-omnipotent men who ride above them. - His peculiar magic as a writer is his capacity to bring dead men to life. Cromwell in Parliament rages in his rugged, prophetic way, and Carlyle, in parentheses, answers him, and we with him, as if we had him before us to speak to, as man to man.¹ The passage of centuries is literally no obstacle, as Carlyle converses with his resurrected heroes. He stands existentially related to them, so that MacPherson's is a palpable hit: "Carlyle's interest in the soul is not of an antiquarian nature; he studies his heroes as if they were ancestors of the Carlyle family."²

In his religious thought, he represents the violent swing away from the unexistential attitude of Deism and the natural theology of rationalism. If this led to a too uncritical "immanentism" or pantheism, he was indifferent to the charge. His motive was to reteach Britain to live again like the Puritans in the constant presence of God, and in constant fear of Him. Thus, he writes in Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, with so much passion that he cannot complete his sentences, "To pluck up the great History of Oliver from (the papers of the period), like drowned Honour by the locks, and show it to much-wondering and, in the end, right-thankful England! The richest

1. E.g., Cromwell, iv, p.154.

2. H.C. MacPherson, Thomas Carlyle, (Famous Scots Series), 2nd edition, Edinburgh, 1897, p.63.

and noblest thing England hitherto has. The basis England will have to start from again, if England is ever to struggle Godward again, instead of struggling Devilward and Mammonward merely."¹

The nostalgia which he felt for the age of the Puritans was, in large part, due to his deep dissatisfaction with the expression of religion in his own day. He saw the religious world divided into three camps, offering but weak resistance to the onslaughts of scepticism: the orthodox were busy entrenching themselves in the obscurantism of "verbal inspiration"; the High Church Party was throwing up the defenses of ecclesiastical formalism in theology and ritual; the Broad Church pioneers of "liberal Protestantism" were building what looked like the most promising adjustments to the new science. But Carlyle's opinion was that none of them had the zeal to win the battle. It was the earnestness (rather than the theology) of the Puritans that he admired-- a quality so often stressed and even exaggerated, that Thomas Chalmers once remarked of him that he was a "lover of earnestness more than of truth."²

The earnestness goes so deep as to strike a quite unexpected reservoir-- of humor. Carlyle's humor is indeed as deep as his seriousness; both are on the same level. While the humor of most men is, as it were, bubbling and frothy, skimmed from the surface, his is clear and pure; it comes from the springs of his spirit. It is clouded by no levity. It is exhilarat-

1. Vol. iii, p.2.

2. J. Nichol, Thomas Carlyle, (English Men of Letters), 2nd edition, London, 1894, p.29.

ing, it does one moral good to drink it. When one laughs with Carlyle, one laughs with great seriousness. It is only a bird of the same feather, such as G.K. Chesterton, who can recognize this. Thus has he penetratingly commented on Carlyle's humor, which he sees to rest upon religious foundations: "The profound security of Carlyle's sense of the unity of the Cosmos is like that of a Hebrew prophet; and it has the same expression that it had in the Hebrew prophets-- humor. A man must be full of faith to jest about his divinity... To the Hebrew prophets their religion was so solid a thing, like a mountain or a mammoth, that the irony of its contact with trivial and fleeting matter struck them like a blow. So it was with Carlyle. His supreme contribution, both to philosophy and literature, was his sense of the sarcasm of eternity."¹ In another place, he remarks that Carlyle "laughed as well as swore, like Elijah, at the prophets of Baal."² One may cite but one example of this "serious humor", the well-known passage in Sartor about the thirty citizens of a British village of "Dumdrudge" shooting and being shot by thirty citizens of a French village of ditto on an Austrian battlefield that means nothing to either of the unfortunate parties. We are thus made to feel sharply the incongruity and senselessness of war.³

Perhaps the principal benefit a systematic study of Carlyle's religious thought has for us today is the recognition of a religious nature which, although it has shuffled off the coil

1. Twelve Types, London, 1902, pp.123,4.

2. Introduction to Sartor Resartus, published by Cassell and Co., London, n.d., p.5.

3. Sartor, pp.139,40.

of orthodox Christian belief, nevertheless leaves entirely on the nourishment of that same spiritual tradition. Carlyle, in a sense, typifies religious liberalism; indeed, his is, in a popular way, probably the strongest individual influence in the Anglo-Saxon world in the movement now referred to as "liberal Protestantism". All the characteristics of that movement are in Carlyle, in a fresh state-- doubt of the old claims of authority, tolerance of other religions, insistence upon the general and natural character of revelation, dubiety about the status and efficacy of the church, utter forgetfulness of the doctrine of justification by faith, exclusive stress upon the ethic of Christianity, etc. Carlyle was a moralist par excellence, what theology calls a "Pelagian", who, in spite of his perception of the moral depravity of the run of men, never seriously put to himself the question, "Why, if a man sees his duty, does he not do it?" He never profoundly experienced the Pauline despair, the despair of the moralist confronted by the absolute demand of the "law", appalled and humbled by the contemplation of the moral perfection of God. This is the real reason why he never experienced the genuine peace of the Christian faith. He knew only the anxious zeal of Paul before the experience of the Damascus road. He never suffered the profound disillusionment which is prerequisite to the conversion of a moralist. His "peace", such as it was, rested in the absolute conviction that God exists, that He is just, and that His moral laws, against which man may judge their actions, are absolutely dependable. It was not the better peace that comes from the discovery of a loving Father dealing with incredible mercy with

man who, by his inevitable moral failure, is no longer able to live with God or himself.

Although the "appreciation" of Carlyle is unalloyed delight, the critic who strives to systematize, describe, and account for Carlyle's ideas finds himself, at the outset, quite at a loss. For Carlyle possesses no "philosophy", no system; he offers no aid to the literary detective intent on "influences" and "formative factors", and one even hunts long and vainly for a vocabulary of terms conveying consistent meaning. He evades us, and seems to deride our pedantic efforts to "classify" him. Flashes of insight and fireworks of imagery dazzle us, but they are disconnected by the blackness between them, and at times we long for some clear, consistent light, which would be steady even though not as exciting. In the final stages of despair, the critic, if he has not become utterly dehumanized, feels that Carlyle is rebuking him for his impertinence, like Kierkegaard addressing the future "professors" who will composedly dissect his thought in future classrooms. "Pantheism, Pottheism, Mydoxy, Thydoxy," he seems to be saying to us personally, "are nothing at all to me; a weariness the whole jargon, which I avoid speaking of, decline listening to: Live, for God's sake, with what Faith thou couldst get; leave off speaking about Faith! Thou knowest it not. Be silent, do not speak."¹ To the critic in such a mood, "silent reverence" seems the only decent attitude. One does not go up to Jeremiah in the streets of Jerusalem and impertinently inquire

1. Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, i, p.190.

what are the comparative "formative factors" from Moses, Amos, and Hosea (and their inter-relationship) upon his "thought"!

Perhaps the only justification for breaking silence is to silence those who ought to have kept silence. For since 1914, like the Beast of the Apocalypse, Carlyle's name has been linked in turn with Nietzsche, Kaiser Wilhelm II, and Hitler. In the very face of his lofty moral ideal, some "scholars" have hastened to identify him with the worst forms of the irresponsible use of power. Even the National Socialists of pre-war Germany used his pronouncements about heroes and his favorable comparisons of 18th century Prussia with the moribund Holy Roman Empire, anarchic Poland, and profligate France as texts for the adulation of the Führer and the Master Race. It occurs to us that they must have done a great deal of editing.¹ There is no doubt that Carlyle is partly culpable. He employed unguarded language, he rode his hero hobby along all the main thoroughfares and down all the byways of his thought, he harped upon the liberal illusion of promising a panacea in the mere extension of the franchise, and, as Chesterton says, he often "went the whole hog" with "a species of insane logic" that drove him even to oppose the emancipation of slaves.

When we have admitted all this, it is necessary to add that no one of Carlyle's stature deserves to be pronounced ineligible for modern study, merely because of his extravagance and exagger-

1. Hitler himself had Goebbels read selected passages of the History of Frederick the Great to him, during his last days in the bunker under the Reich Chancellery (see Trevor-Roper, The Last Days of Hitler, London, 1947).

ations. Indeed, it is his extravagance that renders him great, when it is not applied to dubious realms. And, if modern readers could quell their suspicions long enough to read what precisely he says about the hero, they would not only be surprised at the dissimilarity of his lineaments with those of the demagogues so recently exteemed, but they might even be provoked to ask if Carlyle does not still have something constructive to say about the problem of political leadership. The bugaboo dispelled, Carlyle might again, on many issues other than that of hero-worship, inspire men, and above all, point to a solid place to stand on, away from the shifting sands of moral relativism.

Most of the current critical interest in Carlyle concerns his treatment of social problems-- his attacks upon the idle aristocracy, upon the "Mammonism" of factory owners, his espousal of the cause of the working classes. He was a strange mixture of radicalism and Toryism, a paradox which is in itself a fascinating study, but it is omitted in this investigation. A study of the practical application of his gospel of work upon the specific problems of his time would only lead us into too wide a field, and away from our central concern.

If an undue amount of attention appears to have been given to the biographical aspect of our study, it is both because the colorful personality of Carlyle demands it, and because an understanding of the spiritual convulsions he endured is essential to a total comprehension of his religious thought. After the first

three chapters, our investigation proceeds to as systematic an analysis as is possible, in consideration of the lack of systematization in Carlyle, and the rather more conspicuous limitations of this writer!

NOTE

The references to Carlyle's works are made to the standard Centenary Edition (see bibliography, pp.333f). In some cases, only a single word from the full title is used to indicate the reference (e.g., Sartor). When an essay is quoted, it is named together with the particular volume concerned of the five volumes of the Critical and Miscellaneous Essays. The books by Carlyle not included in the Centenary Edition are referred to in the usual manner.

The four biographical volumes of Froude's (see bibliography, p.347), which are, for the most part, a source of Carlyle's journals and letters, are referred to only by the name of the author and the volume number, i.e., A History of the First Forty Years of His Life are vols. i and ii; A History of His Life in London are vols. iii and iv. The six volumes of Wilson's (see bibliography, p.352), containing all the biographical data and the complete anecdotage, although they bear different titles, are also referred to by author and volume number in the appropriate order. Norton's edition of part of the journals, under the title of Two Notebooks of Thomas Carlyle's, from 23rd March, 1822 to 16th May, 1832, is used somewhat because it is more complete and accurate than Froude's editing of the same. The editions of the letters, edited by Norton and Alexander Carlyle, are also used freely, for the same reason.

It is hoped that the reader may share in the writer's satisfaction of his curiosity in the revealing fugitive pieces which occasioned the three appendices. They are, however, non-essential to the study, and, with the exception of Appendix Three, they are somewhat conjectural.

American spelling has been used, except in direct quotations of Carlyle and other British writers. If more capital letters appear than is desirable, it is doubtless due to the corrupting influence of Carlyle himself!

CHAPTER ONE.

ORIGINS.

"Prepare us for these solemn events,
Death, Judgment, and Eternity"
(Prayer of James Carlyle)¹

Francis Jeffrey, the prosperous, gay, little Edinburgh advocate--whose friendship with Carlyle was certainly a meeting of opposites, if ever there was such--wrote once in a bantering letter, "You are so dreadfully in earnest".² The "dreadful earnestness" was the spiritual meat that accompanied the porridge and potatoes in the humble Ecclefechan home. It was the strong meat provided by the father which formed the spiritual sinews of the child destined in the nineteenth century to be England's indomitable prophet.

The appropriate territory of the Cameronians, the last of the Covenanters, was chosen by a wise Providence for the appearance of its destined one. Here was a long-standing tradition of religion as a thing to be bitterly contended for, where resistance had frequently been "unto blood".³ On a Sunday in June, 1679, Claverhouse and his dragoons were routed at Drumclog Moss⁴

1. Reminiscences, ed. by Norton, i, p.20.

2. Wilson, ii, p.63.

3. G.D.Henderson, The Church in Scotland, a Short History, Edinburgh, 1939, pp.80f.

"Dumfriesshire...was sternly Cameronian. Stories of the persecutions survived in the farmhouses as their most treasured historical traditions. Cameronian congregations lingered till the beginning of the present century, when they merged in other bodies of seceders from the established religion". (Froude, i, p.1.)

4. Cf. below, p.70 . Ironically, it is close by where Carlyle tells Irving he has abandoned the faith of his fathers.

by an open-air congregation that could fight as well as pray.

This was a glowing ember. The fire of the Covenants itself had been put out by Cromwell at Dunbar in 1650. Carlyle, no sentimental native, wrote not regretfully of this, but added significantly, "The spirit and substance of it (i.e., the Covenant), please God, will never die in this or in any world".¹ He had, after all, been born into this "spirit", and he never lost an opportunity to praise his "Presbyterian Scotland". Writing in his essay on Scott of the heritage that was about the only thing they shared (but probably the main thing in both of them), he said, "A country where the entire people is, or even once has been, laid hold of, filled to the heart with an infinite religious idea, has 'made a step from which it cannot retrograde'. (This was quoted from Goethe). Thought, conscience, the sense that man is denizen of a Universe, creature of an Eternity, has penetrated to the remotest cottage, to the simplest heart. Beautiful and awful, the feeling of a Heavenly Behest, of Duty god-commanded, over-canopies all life. There is an inspiration in such a people; one may say in a more special sense, 'the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding'".²

Carlyle's great-grandfather, John Carlyle of Burrens in the Annandale parish of Middlebie, was born in 1687 during the terrible "Killing Time". He was one of many generations of

1. Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, vol. ii, p.209.

2. Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, vol. iv, p.42.

Cf. also in "Portraits of John Knox", *ibid.*, vol. v, pp. 356ff, for his view of Knox and the Reformation as "the parent of endless blessing to Scotland and to all Scotsmen".

farmers, and the ancestor furthest back in history who was at all precise in Carlyle's memory. Family tradition in his case is largely a blank. One does not find what might be expected, an ascending ancestry of increasingly religious forbears going back and up to some disciple of John Knox. On the contrary, in the Reminiscences, we have a very human account of Thomas Carlyle, the grandfather and namesake of our Thomas, as a man with only "a certain religiousness" which "could not be made dominant and paramount: his life lay in two; I figure him as very miserable, and pardon... all his irregularities...."¹

As if to rescue matters just in time, a Sovereign Providence seems to have predestined James Carlyle, the son of this Thomas to be of the Elect, and so be the proper progenitor of our Thomas. We have the figure of him drawn with loving accuracy in the Reminiscences, the best of all of Carlyle's many pen portraits. It is no unimportant matter to get a clear view of this mason-farmer, if we are to take his son's words seriously: "I seem to myself only the continuation, and second volume of my Father".² Carlyle was positively disinclined to introspection, and it is always only by digging in sidewise that one can uncover his roots.

Living to the age of eighty-five, Carlyle might have had reason to appreciate the literal fulfilment of the reward promised to those who faithfully observe the Fifth Commandment.

1. Op. cit., pp. 24ff.

2. Ibid., p. 52.

One of the village elders had warned his father, "'Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents.' My Father once told me this; and added: 'Thou hast not done so. God be thanked for it!'"¹ The "reminiscence" shows far more than ordinary filial honor. We see a discerning eye for the real worth of a "peasant saint". In Sartor, he made plain his veneration of the manliness his father typified. "Two men I honour, and no third. First, the toilworn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement laboriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand; crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the Sceptre of this Planet. Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! .. For in thee too lay a god-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour; and thy body, like thy soul, was not to know freedom".²

The portrait of his father is the more credible for the son's honest recognition of his "half-developed" nature. "We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him".³ The mother was the confidante for the children. Impatient of "clatter" (idle talk), he was one to encourage respect rather than familiarity. It was not hardness, or we should not have Carlyle telling us he had "often seen him weep too; his voice would thicken and his lips

1. Ibid., p. 19.

2. Op. cit., p. 181.

3. Reminiscences, p. 15.

curve while reading the Bible" at family worship. Absorbed as he was with life's most practical matter--the saving of his soul--he could not afford to dissipate his energies in any way. "'Man's chief end', my father could have answered from the depths of his soul, 'is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever'. (He was quoting the Shorter Catechism). By this light he walked, choosing his path, fitting prudence to principle with wonderful skill and manliness-- through 'the ruins of a falling Era' (Carlyle's phrase for the dissolution of orthodox Protestantism), not once missing his footing".¹

One can still see Auldgirth Bridge spanning the River Nith eight miles above Dumfries. As a mason's apprentice, under twenty years, he had worked as a "hewer" and learned a trade that made him a faithful workman in Ecclefechan. The bridge stands, and the "Arched House" of Ecclefechan still stands too--both of them the work of the father, and in the house the son was born on December 5, 1795. Far more than the brooding statue (a duplicate of Boehm's in Chelsea) that surveys the village from the hill on the Glasgow road, these two structures are the monuments to the spirit that finally found voice in the evangelist of the gospel of work. We shall examine in detail the phenomenon of the Calvinist working out his salvation in a later chapter. Here we must see a veritable Calvinist doing the same, and creating an impression that is later shared with thousands of readers. "He wanted only to get along with his Task... This great maxim of Philosophy he had gathered by the teaching of nature alone:

1. Ibid., pp. 19f.

That man was created to work, not to speculate, or feel, or dream. Accordingly he set his whole heart thitherwards: he did work wisely and unweariedly (ohne Hast aber ohne Rast), and perhaps performed more (with the tools he had) than any man I know. It should have made me sadder than it did to hear the young ones sometimes complaining of his slow punctuality and thoroughness: he would leave nothing till it was done".¹

In 1815, the mason abandoned his craft because the demand for solid structures had decreased (!), and became an industrious farmer. As a tenant, he was given opportunity to show a healthy admixture of respect for and independence of his "superiors", which precise admixture was to bring consternation to the aristocratic victims of a prophet in the middle of the century.²

Genealogists in making the point of the influence of heredity, often miss the point. This is the case with Carlyle, whose father was evidently the spiritual offspring not of a lineal ancestor but a maternal uncle, Robert Brand. Religion is most frequently transmitted by persons. We are fortunate in having a clear indication in Carlyle's case of the course of this transmission. If only more than a paragraph had been given to this unshakeable old Calvinist who was Carlyle's real Grandfather! "Happily there still existed in Annandale an influence of Goodness, pure emblems of a Religion: there were yet men living, from whom a youth of earnestness might learn by example

1. Ibid., p. 7.

2. Cf. ibid., pp. 11, 49.

how to become a man. Old Robert Brand, my Father's maternal uncle, was probably of very great influence on him in this respect: old Robert was a rigorous Religionist, thoroughly filled with a celestial Philosophy of this earthly Life, which shone impressively through his stout decisive, and somewhat cross-grained deeds and words. Sharp sayings of his are still recollected there; not unworthy of preserving. He was a man of iron firmness, a just man and of wise insight. I think, my Father, consciously and unconsciously, may have learned more from this than from any other individual. From the time when he connected himself openly with the Religious,--became a 'Burgher' (strict, not strictest species of Presbyterian Dissenter) may be dated his spiritual majority; his earthly Life was now enlightened and overcanopied by a heavenly: he was henceforth a Man".¹

The "Man" was above all things a staunch believer. Carlyle was fond of speaking of him as the last of a race, fearing God, nothing doubting, resting his hope on the after-life, working diligently while here, and while passing, inculcating the "dreadful earnestness" in those around him. It was not disparagement, but wistfulness that provoked the son's comment, "He was never visited with Doubt; the old Theorem of the Universe was sufficient for him... Thus, curiously enough, and blessedly, he stood a true man on the verge of the Old; while his son stands here lovingly surveying him on the verge of the New..."²

This filial portrait is probably one of the best proofs in

1. Ibid., pp. 40f.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

our literature that Calvinism in practice was anything but a cringing religion. The most eloquent paragraph we shall have to quote. "I call my Father a brave man (ein Tapferer). Man's face he did not fear; God he always feared: his Reverence, I think, was considerably mixed with Fear. Yet not slavish Fear; rather Awe, as of unutterable Depths of Silence, through which flickered a trembling Hope. How he used to speak of Death (especially in late years) or rather to be silent, and look of it! There was no feeling in him here that he cared to hide; he trembled at the really terrible; the mock-terrible he cared nought for.--That last act of his Life; when in the last agony, with the thick ghastly vapours of Death rising round him to choke him, he burst through and called with a man's voice on the great God to have mercy on him: that was like the epitome and concluding summary of his whole Life. God gave him strength to wrestle with the King of Terrors, and as it were even then to prevail. All his strength came from God, and ever sought new nourishment there. God be thanked for it".¹ His oft-repeated prayer was woven so tightly into the son's young spirit that it could be recalled as by second nature; "Prepare us for these solemn events, Death, Judgment, and Eternity".²

While moving irrevocably beyond the "old dispensation" of orthodox Calvinism, Carlyle could appreciate the absence of obscurantism in his father's faith. His religion put his reason on its mettle and gave him a "habit of Intellect" "thoroughly free and even incredulous". He had a healthy scorn for anything

1. Ibid., p. 10.

2. Ibid., p. 20. Cf. also The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, ed. by C.E. Norton, London, 1883, vol. 11, p.301.

that was not true, whether village gossip, or the Arabian Nights. Apparently this disdain for fictionizing even extended to homiletical fancies. "On one occasion a reverend gentleman had been favoring the congregation of Mr. Carlyle's church with a terrible description of the last judgment. James listened to him calmly; but when the sermon was finished, he came out of his pew, and placing himself before the reverend gentleman, and all the congregation, he said, aloud, "Ay, ye may thump and stare til yer een start frae their sockets, but ye'll na gae me believe sic stuff as that!"¹ The Bible was God's truth, and beside this it was thought fit to read only such books as Anson's Voyage and the writings of John Owen, the seventeenth century theologian.² Wilson is quite right in his observation that "as the old cock crows, the young one learns. Imitation of his fearless and outspoken father began Carlyle's enthusiasm for truth,³ and it was confirmed by the examples of evangelists his father honoured, living 'sons of thunder', inspired by Luther and Knox."⁴ Not only enthusiasm for truth, but the colorful manner of setting it out, was a filial inheritance. Sardonic humor was the weapon of the father as of the son, who reported his description of a certain ineffective preacher as "a fly wading through tar".⁵

Carlyle's readiness to speak reverently of his father was still with him twenty-eight years later when, in 1860, discouraged enough about his contemporary world, he revealed to an

1. Repeated by M.D. Conway, Thomas Carlyle, London, 1881, p.19, from an article by J. Routledge in Moorerjee's Magazine, Oct., 1872.
2. Ibid., pp. 27ff.
3. "'Truth', I cried, 'though the Heavens crush me for following her: no falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy'". (Sartor, p. 131.)
4. Op. cit., 11, p. 224.
5. Reminiscences, p. 19.

admirer, the blind Milburn, "If I could only see such men now as were my father and his minister-- men of such fearless and simple faith, with such firmness in holding on to the things that they believed, in saying and doing only what they thought was right, in seeing and hating the thing that they felt to be wrong-- I should have far more hope for this British nation, and indeed for the world at large".¹ In this unflagging veneration of the hard-working peasant, Carlyle, who came to be lionized by London's elite, had prefigured himself in Teufelsdröckh, whom acquaintance with palaces had not made forgetful of his native cottage.² The moral rigor handed down from father to son we shall try to understand more fully later as the fruit of Calvinist spirituality. In James Carlyle it was manifested in moral indignation that struck fear into the offender. Idleness and injustice he condemned with utter forthrightness, and any slackness in his family was met with a wrath they all dreaded.³ There was the typical condemnation of amusements, cards or dancing, that did not glorify God, and we hear in

1. Wilson, D.A., op. cit., vol. v, p. 389.

It is remarkable how all through life he held up his father as a model. Writing to a friend in 1851, he said, "A long experience has taught me to believe that the world's bravest men are often they whom the world never hears of... Ah, me, when I read the lamentations of some unrecognized poetical, political, or other big-blown imbecile, and think of my own brave Father and of others whom I have known, I too am without words". (Cornhill Magazine, vol. L, 1921, pp. 757f.)

2. Sartor, p. 181.

3. Reminiscences, p. 9.

Sartor, "I was forbid much: wishes in any measure bold I had to renounce; everywhere a strait bond of Obedience inflexibly held me down".¹ The father was seeing to it that no empty idleness tempted his children aside from their plain duties, and the simple household was given a very stoical character. His son remarks that it was the misery of his father's own early life that helped to make him a stoic, and this stoicism was passed on to the next generation when it flowered in Carlyle's way of life-- not a pagan discipline, but under Calvinistic forms.

The relation of Carlyle to the mother who lived to witness his highest literary triumphs and died in his fifty-eighth year, was beautiful throughout. Speaking to Conway in his late years, he stressed her loftiness of moral aim, and religious conviction, her wit and originality of mind. It is a pity he did not leave behind a monograph of his mother, as he had done for his father. But we have no slight appreciation of her profound religious influence in Sartor. "My kind Mother.. did me one altogether invaluable service: she taught me, less indeed by word than by act and daily reverent look and habitude, her own simple version of the Christian Faith... My Mother, with a true woman's heart, and fine though uncultivated sense, was in the strictest acceptation Religious. The Highest whom I knew on Earth I here saw bowed down, with awe unspeakable, before a Higher in Heaven: such things, especially in infancy, reach inwards to the very core of your being; mysteriously does a Holy of Holies build itself into visibility in the mysterious deeps; and Reverence,

1. P. 78.

the divinest in man, springs forth undying from its mean envelopment of Fear".¹ By her, his moral sensitivity was so cultivated that he later consciously abjured the pursuit of fame and the acquisition of wealth, and saw only the doing of his duty as a necessity. In the other autobiography we have, an unfinished novel called Wotton Reinfred, written in his early years as a practice performance for Sartor,² we can discover the kind of pure Calvinist moral teaching she impressed upon him: "She trained his heart to the love of all truth and virtue; but of his other faculties she took little heed, and could take little proper charge. To this good being, intellect, or even activity, except when directed to the purely useful, was no all-important matter; for her soul was full of loftiest religion, and truly regarded the glories of this earth as light chaff; nay, we may say she daily and almost hourly felt as if the whole material world were but a vision and a show, a shadowy bark bound together only ^{by} the Almighty's word, and transporting us as if through a sea of dreams to the solemn shore of Eternity, in whose unutterable light the bark would melt like vapour, and we ourselves awake to endless weal or woe.. She never said to him: 'Be great, be learned, be rich'; but, 'Be good and holy, seek God and thou shalt find Him'. 'What is wealth' she would say; 'What are crowns and sceptres? The fashion of them passeth away. Heed not the world, thou hast a better inheritance; fear it not, sufficient food and

1. P. 79.

2. Published under the inappropriate title, Last Words of Thomas Carlyle, London, 1892.

raiment our Father will provide thee; has He not clothed the sparrow against winter, and given it a fenced house to dwell in?"¹

"Oh, Tom, mind the golden season of youth", was a motherly counsel that sank so deep he was repeating it a lifetime later to the young men of Edinburgh University, who received in his Rectorial Address the remarkable essence of what Carlyle would have given to sons of his own, had they not been withheld. It was to assure the continuance of their close relationship in his absence that she took the pains to learn to write, and the simple, spiritual solicitude of her brief letters is very affecting. One of them is worth transcribing.

Mainhill: June 10, 1817.

Dear Son,--I take this opportunity of writing you a few lines, as you will get it free. I long to have a craik, and look forward to August, trusting to see thee once more, but in hope the meantime. Oh, Tom, mind the golden season of youth, and remember your Creator in the days of your youth. Seek God while He may be found. Call upon Him while He is near. We hear that the world by wisdom knew not God. Pray for His presence with you, and His counsel to guide you. Have you got through the Bible yet? If you have, read it again. I hope you will not weary, and may the Lord open your understanding.

I have no news to tell you, but thank God we are all in an ordinary way. I hope you are well. I thought you would have written before now. I received your present and was very proud of it. I called it 'my son's venison'. Do write as soon as this comes to hand and tell us all your news. I am glad you are so contented in your place. We ought all to be thankful for our places in these distressing times, for I dare say they are felt keenly. We send you a small piece of ham and a minding of butter, as I am sure yours is done before now. Tell us about it in your next, and if anything is wanting.

Goodnight, Tom, for it is a very stormy night, and I must away to the byre to milk.

Now, Tom, be sure to tell me about your chapters.
No more from

Your old

MINNIE.

So unquestioning a believer was his mother, that Carlyle later learned he could not frankly open his mind to her on religious matters without causing pain. The depth of his loyalty is seen in this, that the repression of his speaking could not force the repression of his affection.¹ Then, too, the very undoubting forthrightness of her religion was a substantial check on her son's apostasy. What a world of respect is there in his observation to his brother, "Go whither she may, she will have her Bible with her, and her faith in God. She is the truest Christian believer I have ever met with; nay, I might almost say the only true one".²

1. Late in life, Carlyle recalled how he "did learn at length by judicious endeavor, to speak piously and agreeably to one so pious, without unverity on my part, nay it was a kind of interesting exercise to wind softly out of those anxious affectionate cavils of her dear heart on such occasions, and get real sympathy, real assent, under borrowed forms". (Reminiscences, ii. p. 92).

One editor of his letters remarks, "In reading the variously published letters addressed to his father and mother, one is greatly impressed with the warm affection breathing through every line of them; with the great interest the letters evince to promote his parents' peace and happiness; and as to attacking their religious beliefs, what beyond all else strikes one in the letters to his mother is the quite remarkable skill they display in avoiding the saying of anything that would be likely to prove hurtful to her Christian faith. So far from being a freethinking swashbuckler in his relations with his mother, the facts disclosed are quite the reverse. The letters, so far as this point is concerned, show rather an entirely pious and quite justifiable artifice in dwelling on what was common ground and skilfully avoiding the points on which their views diverged. Even the sternest preacher of the 'veracities' has sometimes to use a little finesse, and he would surely be a sour and unlovely moralist who could find it in his heart to blame him".

(D. Gorrie, in the Fortnightly Review, Apr., 1914, vol. ci, p. 639).

2. Letter of Feb. 25, 1834, Froude, ii, p. 414.

Thus, in the understanding of his parents, we come to a much greater understanding of the son. The "man's-nest" of their making was constructed of the hard sticks of frugality, work, authority, and righteousness, deep affection holding them together. Because righteousness was a living tradition around Carlyle as a child, it became his greatest truth, which he taught as a divine law of nature. The habit of obedience, emphasized in Sartor, he called "the root of deeper earnestness". But there was under the moral rigor, the ground-tone of religion constantly playing in his ears. He was taught that "beyond the region of material usefulness religion was the only study profitable to man... Ever in his great Taskmaster's eye, he watched over his words and actions with even an over-scrupulousness. His little prayer came evening and morning from a full heart, and life, in the thought of the innocent boy, seemed little else than a pilgrimage through a sacred alley, with the pinnacles of the Eternal Temple at its close".¹

Religious practice under the family roof was an important part of the Carlyle household, where the observance of family worship was typical. Descriptions of the patriarchal and priestly function of the head of the house, in conducting worship, catechising members of the family and servants, and examining the same on Sunday afternoons as to the content of the sermon heard that morning, are given in many records of the period.²

1. Wotton Reinfred, pp. 19f.

2. For example, J. Hay and H. Belfrage, Memoir of the Rev. Alexander Waugh, D.D., Edinburgh, 1839, pp. 5, 10.

No picture, certainly, is more familiar than that of the solemn worship around the fire in Burns' The Cotter's Saturday Night.

"From scenes like these, Old Scotia's grandeur springs,
That makes her lov'd at home, rever'd abroad".

No doubt, not only at family worship was religion discussed, and on other occasions within the family circle, but also in ^{the} hearing of the boy who later described the "brave old Linden and Sacred tree" that sheltered the village elders while they talked theology. It was the Scottish custom on the Sabbath to gather in the open clearing before the meeting-house for an hour to debate themes great and small, to consider

"--thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Faith--
Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute--
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost".

A sample debate is related by Wilson. "One day two village theologians were debating the details of the Resurrection, an impending event which seemed as certain as the next year's spring and summer. George Macivin and Robert Scott took that for granted; but George Macivin maintained that new bodies, fresh and pleasant, would then be provided for the saints, and Scott was arguing that the identical bodies which here were worn would rise again, for all things were possible to God, and so on. They might have talked till they were tired, if they had not entangled James Carlyle in their debate. He cut it short by saying--"I think a stinking clog of a body like Robert Scott the weaver's would be very unfit to inhabit those places!"¹

1. i, p. 11.

It was a favorite saying of Carlyle's that great men are not born among fools. "When a great soul rises up, it is generally in a place where there has been much hidden worth and intelligence at work for a long time".¹ This applied to himself certainly. In the autobiographical second book of Sartor he more explicitly acknowledges "the all-but omnipotence of early culture and nurture: hereby we have either a doddered dwarf bush, or a high-towering, wide-shadowing tree".² Gratitude for this nurture was a leading motif for the rest of his life. I have not detected anywhere in his writings or letters a trace of rebellion against his childhood training as confining, though it would have been natural for him to express himself so when he ranted against "Jewish old clothes". On the contrary he was quite genuine when he was writing to his mother to thank his parents for their religious and moral instruction, a gift he places foremost, even above their sacrifice for his education.³ He called it the greatest of all blessings.

The character of Carlyle as a boy, as recalled by himself in Wotton Reinfred, was one of "excessive sensibility", his shyness, tendency to weep, making him a ready victim to the barbarities of school existence. Only occasionally did he fire up into effective indignation; motherly counsels of pacifism were adhered to except in extremity. The budding genius as well

1. Conway, op. cit., p. 16. Cf. also the Rectorial Address (Essays, iv, p. 463).

2. P. 75.

3. Letter to mother, Mar. 17, 1817. (Froude, i, p. 46).

as the mature man knew the pain of sensitive isolation. At this early age came the conviction, "I was like no other;... in action, speculation, and social position, my fellows are perhaps not numerous".¹ It would not be consistent with the facts as his biographers have gathered them, however, to suggest that Carlyle was unusually withdrawn from the ordinary fun of childhood. But we do have a picture of him as being extraordinarily alert, serious in his school studies, and certainly encouraged to earnestness in his family circle.

Most profound of his early childhood experiences was the death of his baby sister Janet when he was only six. This was told to Conway, and we see it in Wotton as well.² It was the mysterious realization of "that last, that awful change" he was familiar with in his father's prayers. It remained in his memory, as did the sight of his uncle's dead face that same year,³ and was the first sobering event which later bore fruit in a constantly recurring emphasis upon the swift passage of time and the shortness of life. "Frail, transitory man! we weep over him in fondest pity, for the shadows of Death bound in our brightest visions, and mingling in the jubilee of Nature is heard a voice of lamentation!"⁴ Rising to an eloquent dirge are his reflections in Sartor:⁵

1. Sartor, pp. 83, 86; cf. also Wotton Reinfred, pp. 17ff, and Reminiscences, ii, p.16.
2. P. 18.
3. Reminiscences, i, 33.
4. Wotton, p. 121.
5. Pp. 85f.

"These stern experiences, planted down by Memory in my Imagination, rose there to a whole cypress-forest, sad but beautiful; waving, with not unmelodious sighs, in dark luxuriance, in the hottest sunshine, through long years of youth:--as in manhood also it does, and will do; for I have now pitched my tent under a Cypress-tree; the Tomb is now my inexpugnable Fortress, ever close by the gate of which I look upon the hostile armaments, and pains and penalties of tyrannous Life placidly enough, and listen to its loudest threatenings with a still smile".

Ecclefechan, the little Annandale village which is hardly larger today than it was in 1795, is now nearly as famous as Tarsus. The very oddity of its name fascinates the ear of the devout pilgrim, who is even more interested to learn its probable etymology. Carlyle would be born where the name of the seventh century Irish Saint Fechanus has remained behind in his Annandale mission territory! The "Church of St. Fechanus" is now known as the "Birthplace of Thomas Carlyle".¹

What is still of chief interest to us in this study is the church of Ecclefechan, the old Burgher meeting-house where Carlyle as a boy heard the Word of Life. It remained a precious memory to him throughout life. Writing home to his mother from Edinburgh of a service he had attended with the sermon preached by Dr. M'Crie (the biographer of Knox), he spoke of hearing "our own old St. Paul's and St. Peter's (venerable tunes)

1. Froude, i, p. 3, note.

chanted with so much alacrity and apparent devoutness. It brought the little meeting-house at home, and all the innocent joyance of childhood back to mingle strangely with the agitations of after-life..."¹

The Burghers, or "Erskinites", were the main heirs of the first secession of 1733, the movement of revitalized Puritanism in the eighteenth century. Formally called the Association Synod, and led by Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine, the occasion of the schism was the issue of patronage, which a century later was to cause a second great disruption in the established church. The underlying causes were deeper, and can be summed up as a protest of a purer strain of Calvinism against the "Moderates" of the Establishment. The Seceders were unhappy with the "Moderate" emphasis on reason and conduct.² And they were dissatisfied with the spirit of lax toleration in the church, with the principle of establishment itself, with submission to patronage, and finally with the tyranny of the

1. Early Letters, 1, pp. 338, 9.

2. See Burns' caricature in The Holy Fair of the "Moderate" style of preaching "on practice and on morals":

"What signifies his barren shine,
Of moral pow'rs an' reason?
His English style, an' gesture fine
Are a' clean out o' season.
Like Socrates or Antonine,
Or some auld pagan heathen,
The moral man he does define,
But ne'er a word o' faith in
That's right that day."

church over freedom of conscience.¹

The name "Burghers" revealed that though of the strict tradition, they were not of the strictest. For the "principle of seceding" was soon carried into the trivial question of a Burgess oath required by Parliament. It became the cause of a

1. The religion of the "Moderates" "usually possessed these marks--(a) A dislike of anything of the nature of enthusiasm. It only became enthusiastic in repelling enthusiasm. (b) It enjoined acquiescence in the will of the civil power. It had difficulty in understanding what it meant to suffer for conscience's sake, if in that men included resistance to the State. An axiom of Moderatism was 'the Divine right of the Civil Power'. (c) It had caught the Voltairian idea of the perfectability of human nature, and repudiated the notion of man's entire sinfulness. Moderates, as a rule, had not much of the doctrinal element in their preaching, and it would have been reckoned 'bad form' to press acceptance of Christ upon their hearers, or to plead for a change of heart" (D. Woodside, The Soul of a Scottish Church, Edinburgh, N.D., p. 42).

A typical account by the Seceders of the state of affairs in the Establishment is a contemporary document of 1778 quoted by J. M'Kerrow, History of the Secession Church, Glasgow, 1841, pp. 555,6: "Doctrines that are no less derogatory to the honour, glory, and Godhead of the Son of God, than dangerous to the souls of men, are openly preached and printed, in some places; the exercise of discipline is, by many, either omitted, or accommodated to the temper of the times; the oppressive and unscriptural law of patronage is executed with an inflexible rigour, in spite of repeated remonstrances from reclaiming congregations; the seals of the covenant are prostituted by a promiscuous admission of those who are, by the revealed will of Christ, totally unqualified to receive them, and are therefore inadmissible by his ministers; a disregard, if not a contempt of strictness in a profession or practice of religion, is become almost universal".

Cf. also Henderson, op. cit., pp. 105-8.

On the Secession side, Woodside finds "three main influences at work. The first was personal religious experience, the second a distinct evangelical doctrinal outlook, and the third a recognition of what was due to the supremacy of conscience in the individual notwithstanding what majorities in Synods, Assemblies, or Parliaments might determine" (op. cit., p. 4).

further splitting off of "Anti-Burghers", those who, against the "Burghers" opposed the oath on the ground that it amounted to subscription to the established church. The majority, with the Erskines at its head, adhered to a tolerant position, leaving the oath to the individual conscience.¹

Though it is significant that Carlyle emerged from the more large-minded segment of the Seceders, it is undeniable that he inherited the Secessionist temper. The letters of his Edinburgh days show him to be intensely scornful of the probationers he observed there, keeping their noses to the wind to scent out church vacancies and possible patrons. There is reason to believe that the lack of theological vitality in the established church's divinity curriculum in his University days was one factor in the deflection of his mind from a clerical career. Had he sat at the feet of Dr. Lawson, the whole story of his life might have been different. We know that he shared the Seceders' disdain for the writings of such a "Moderate" leader as Dr. Hugh Blair. At the height of his literary career, he shows the Seceder temper most of all; had he not come from a tradition of protest against ecclesiastical and civil domination, he probably would never have become the defender of England's most notable Protestant,

1. Ibid., pp. 56f.

Oliver Cromwell.¹

Froude quotes a letter of Carlyle's (Aug. 30, 1843) to his wife about a certain Jenny Fraser, "a true daughter of the Covenanters", as worthy of preservation for the history of the Free Kirk. It is worth as much to show the ruggedly independent temper of the narrator. "You remember a lump of an old woman, half haveral (a half-witted person), half genius, called Jenny Fraser. The 'Duke' had decided on high that not an inch of ground should be allowed for a 'non-intrusion' church in that region. But old Jenny Fraser possessed about Boatford a patch of ground independent of all persons, just about equal to holding a church and its eavesdrops, and says she will give it... Agents are at work. Go to Jenny, offer her 10 pounds, 20 pounds.. Jenny is deaf as whinstone, though poor nearly as Job. She answers always, 'I got it from the Lord, and I will give it to the Lord'. And there, it seems, the Free Kirk, in spite of Duke and Devil, is to be. I had a month's mind to go and give Jenny a sovereign myself".²

The best reminiscence we have of the old meeting-house life is in the memoir of Edward Irving.³

1. Perhaps Woodside's description of the Secessionist temper gives us a clue as to the origin of the uncompromising moral rigor that later led many of his "liberal" contemporaries to condemn him as "misanthropic", the "dyspeptic sage", etc.: "The iron of injustice had entered into the soul and begot a tremendous strength of resistance; but the very quality that turned them into Seceders made them intolerant. They saw one thing at a time, but saw it with such intensity of vision that they could not believe that anybody ought to see it differently from themselves... They thought that God meant to lead every man by the same road" (*ibid.*, p. 52).
2. Froude, *op. cit.*, iii, pp. 321f.
3. Reminiscences, ii, pp. 9-15.

To a small group of Annan men who were uncomfortable in the established church there, the boy Irving had attached himself, walking six miles and back each Sunday to attend the Burgher service in Ecclefechan. Carlyle comments that "a man who awoke to the belief that he actually had a soul to be saved or lost was apt to be found among the Dissenting people, and to have given up attendance on the Kirk". He adds that he came to see this was not applicable everywhere in Scotland, and analyzed: "For the rest, all Dissent in Scotland is merely a stricter adherence to the National Kirk in all points; and the then Dissenterage is definable to moderns simply as a 'Free Kirk making no noise'. It had quietly (about 1740), after much haggle and remonstrance, 'seceded', or walked out of its stipends, officialities, and dignities, greatly to the mute sorrow of religious Scotland; and was still, in a strict manner, on the united voluntary principle, preaching to the people what of best and sacredest it could. Not that there was not something of rigour, of severity; a lean-minded controversial spirit among certain brethren, (mostly of the laity, I think); 'narrow-nebs' (narrow of neb, i.e., of nose or bill) as the outsiders called them; of flowerage, or free harmonious beauty, there could not well be much in this system: but really, except on stated occasions (annual fast-day, for instance, when you were reminded that 'a testimony had been lifted up', which you were now the bearers of), there was little, almost no talk, especially no preaching at all about 'patronage', or secular controversy; but all turned on the weightier and universal matters of the Law, and was considerably entitled to say for

itself, 'Hear, all men'. Very venerable are those old Seceder Clergy to me, now when I look back on them. Most of the chief figures among them, in Irving's time and mine, were hoary old men. Men so like what one might call antique 'Evangelists in modern vesture, and Poor Scholars and Gentlemen of Christ', I have nowhere met with in Monasteries or Churches, among Protestant or Papal Clergy, in any country of the world".¹

Most venerable was John Johnstone, the minister for fifty-two years of the little Ecclefechan congregation, "the priestliest man I ever under any ecclesiastical guise was privileged to look upon. He, in his last years, helped me well in my Latin...; and otherwise procured me far higher benefits. This peasant union, this little heath-thatched house, this simple Evangelist,-- together constituted properly the 'Church' of that district: they were the blessing and the saving of many: on me too their pious heaven-sent influences still rest, and live; let me employ them well".²

Another of the venerable was the more well-known George Lawson, Selkirk professor, whose biography by MacFarlane was

1. Reading Fraser's biography of Ralph Erskine in middle life, Carlyle was impressed. "Such a character and form of human existence, conscience living to the finger-ends of him in a strange, venerable, though highly questionable manner...This Ralph makes me reflect, 'Whitherward are we now bound? What has become of all that? Is man grown into a kind of brute that can merely spin and make railways?'"--Froude, iii, p. 320.
2. Reminiscences, i, pp. 40f. The influence of this man may have been in Carlyle's mind when he wrote of Pastor Moser and the young Schiller (Life of Schiller, p. 6).

read and commended by Carlyle.¹ A Burgher throughout life (he died in 1820 ; Johnstone in 1812), he was of what Carlyle called the first generation of Scottish believers, of his own particular tradition. These two men were estimated the highest for scholarship by Adam Hope the school-master and one of the Annan pilgrims earlier mentioned.²

It may have been the occasion of a summer sacrament when he had seen him. It was this practice of the yearly celebration of communion in a five-day period of preaching and self-examination, climaxed in the sacrament, that was one of the most characteristic features of church life in these times. One may still observe today the remnant of this practice in the large attendance at the communion services of the Church of Scotland of numbers of people whose relationship to the church is otherwise quite nominal. In the days of Carlyle's youth, the summer sacrament must have been the year's high point in church life, for from a Thursday, observed as a fast-day when the preaching began, until Monday, the day of thanksgiving after Sunday's celebration of the sacrament, there was a continuous succession of services of preaching and testimony,

1. "The reflection rises in me that there was not in the British Islands, perhaps, a more genuine, pious-minded, diligent, and faithful man..Professor Lawson, you may believe, was a great man in my boy-circle; never spoken of but with reverence and thankfulness by those I loved best. In a dim but singularly conclusive way, I can still remember seeing him, and even hearing him preach.." (H.J. Nicoll, Thomas Carlyle, Edinburgh, 1881, pp. 2,3).
2. J. MacFarlane, The Life and Times of George Lawson, Edinburgh, 1862, p. 213.

with several visiting ministers, and the congregation so large that it was necessary to hold services in the open air, usually simultaneously with other services proceeding within the church. A fine description of the summer sacrament is contained in MacFarlane's *Life of Lawson*. "The services of the grand occasion commenced on the Thursday preceding, which was observed as a day of humiliation and prayer... All worldly business was suspended during the day.. On the Friday evening there was another diet of worship... By Saturday morning, 'the tent' as it was called had been erected...a huge and awkward-looking moveable pulpit, from which sermons were preached to the thousands who assembled from a radius of ten or twelve miles all around.." Then follows an account of the sacrament itself, the action sermon, the "fencing" or "debarrances" and the receiving of the bread and wine in the church by thousands in relays, with psalms being sung as the people solemnly pass in and out.¹

Great controversy once raged over the question of the fairness of Burns' satirical poem The Holy Fair, discounted by such as MacFarlane, acknowledged by others as a deserved satire on certain abuses . making a serious occasion into a kind

1. Ibid., pp. 79-87.

"The nature of this sacred ordinance, its extreme solemnity, the fervid earnestness of the ministers, and the deep reverence of the hearers, conjoined with an extended and important part of the service performed in the open air, at the foot of a mountain, or on the banks of a stream, and in a pastoral country, were circumstances calculated to make an impression on the sensitive mind, which could never be effaced".
(Hay & Belfrage, op. cit., p. 377).

of festival. Burns castigates the "chosen swatch (sample)

Wi' screw'd up, grace-proud faces"

and he is merciless in caricaturing the various types of preachers, one of them, Moodie, climbing "the holy door (pulpit)

Wi' tidings o' damnation:

Should Hornie, as in ancient days,
'Mang sons o' God present him,
The vera sight o' Moodie's face,
To' s ain het hame had sent him
Wi' fright that day.

What effect the Ecclefechan sacrament left on Carlyle we are not told. He attended with his family, as his biographer has verified, at least until he was twenty-five.¹ It is his very refraining from satire like that of Burns, when satire could be very much his mode, which leads us to think that his memories of these occasions were not unpleasant but a part of the rather wistful recollections already noted, from the remoteness of later years, and a changed attitude toward orthodox religious practices. Carlyle never broke from the church; he drifted from it. The faith of his early years so much remained a part of him that it was impossible for him ever to think of the religion of his father and mother and the "Burghers" as an empty falsehood.

1. Wilson, i, 175.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DRIFT INTO SCEPTICISM.

"Thought must needs be Doubt and Inquiry
before it can again be Affirmation and
Sacred Precept".
("Characteristics") 1

Our interest in the changing mind of Carlyle properly begins with the Winter of 1809-10, the time of the first session he attended at the University of Edinburgh. His own testimony of the value of his University training was a scathing satire. In Sartor., at the "Nameless University", education was "impossible", because "the blind were leading the blind". Sartor's most Swiftian passage, on the desirability of a Statistics of Imposture, a computation of the amount of deception in such realms as his university -- occurs here. This is because he felt that he received no nourishing wisdom, only the poisoned food that gave him the fruitful disease of scepticism. Wryly he recalls its boast as "a Rational University; in the highest degree opposed to Mysticism". The optimistic philosophy of the Enlightenment was being echoed with the empty jargon of "Progress of the Species", "Dark Ages", "Prejudice", and the like, and "the better sort had soon to end in sick, impotent scepticism" (a rather typically proud observation classifying the "orthodox" as not among the better sort). With an allusion to his

1. Essays, iii, p.32.

favorite biblical book¹ he castigates the professors who bade their students to eat the east wind. The only softening of his judgment referred not to what the University had done for him, but only what the existence of the University library (and that managed inefficiently) had made it possible to do for himself. If critics are inclined to doubt the reliability of Sartor as an autobiographical work on all the main points; if, for example, they are incredulous of Carlyle's quite unreserved disparagement of Teufelsdröckh's University training, it is interesting to see his judgment continued through life² and confirmed in old age in his Rectorial Address when he told the students that the main thing the University had done for him, and could do for them, was to teach them to read.³ For here "the great principle of spiritual liberty was admitted in its broadest sense, and nature was left to all, not only without misguidance, but without any guidance at all". He was "left to choose his own society, and form his own habits, and had unlimited command of reading. What a wild world rose before him as he read, and felt, and saw, with as yet unworn avidity".⁴

The research of Masson into this voracious reading covers only the first two years of his University life and is

1. Job xv.2: "Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?".
2. Cf. "Dr Francia" (Essays, lv, pp.282f.) for a tirade against the University that gave no help to Paraguay's future dictator, then training as a priest, and against useless Universities in general.
3. Essays, lv, p.454
4. Wotton, p.20.

interesting to us only in indicating a large appetite for history, travel and literature. Gibbon's first volume was read by the fifteen year old boy, but we know nothing of what he made of it.¹ Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense, and Locke's Essay concerning Human Understanding were books drawn from the library, probably in connection with his logic course in the second session under David Ritchie. His reaction to this course cannot have been favorable, if his later repeated pronouncements on the uselessness of logic in the search for truth are any indication. Reid and Locke, however, are significant as properly Carlyle's introduction to philosophical inquiry. In 1829, when he was well-established in the idealist camp, he looked back quite scornfully at Reid's attempt to prove the reality of matter by reference to common sense: that is, by not proving it, and going on faith.² But he had nothing like this critical vantage point as a student.

We do not know the books that occupied Carlyle's attention in the latter two years of his four year arts course. He was quite unaffected by the new successor to Dugald Stewart in the chair of moral philosophy, Thomas Brown, whose published lectures were so much admired by James Mill and John Stuart Mill. What he

1. D. Masson, Edinburgh Sketches and Memories, London 1892, p.233.
2. "Novalis" (Essays,ii, p.24).

wrote of him in his reminiscence of John Wilson¹ he repeated verbally to Masson, describing him as "a finical man they called Brown, or sometimes Missy Brown, that used to spout poetry". It was probably a combination of being unattracted to Brown's character (a consideration always foremost in Carlyle's judgment of thinkers),² and of aversion to his "new kind of ingenious metaphysics",³ Brown, we fear, must have been regarded as mainly responsible for the "east-wind" provender.

The comment that Carlyle disapproved of Brown's taking "the mind to pieces" in his peculiar way⁴ is misleading unless we see that Carlyle was for years reading metaphysics in the honest but fruitless attempt to find a suitable basis for understanding the operations of the mind. He did not at this period object to philosophy analyzing the mind; indeed he is found in 1816 to be desirous of discovering an understandable philosophy of mind using the method of induction which would offer the certainty this method had offered in Newton's mathematics.⁵

1. ... "the immaculate Dr. Brown (a really pure, high if rather s-hrill and wire-drawing kind of man)... the high-soaring, purely metaphysical (and to me unintelligible, and uninteresting, and at last almost ghastly) Dr. Brown, who had been my Professor" ("Christopher North," Nineteenth Century Magazine, vol. LXXXVII, January, 1920). Recalling Brown in 1871 to Allingham he said he "might as well have listened to a rookery" (W. Allingham, A Diary, ed. by H. Allingham and D. Redford, London, 1907, p. 206).
2. Cf. Early Letters, i, p. 160, for his high esteem for Stewart's character.
3. Masson, op. cit., p. 235.
4. W. Minto, Manual of English Prose Literature, New ed., Edinburgh, 1881, p. 138.
5. Early Letters, i, p. 81

The preoccupation of Carlyle as a University student with the inductive discipline of mathematics, in which he excelled, is the key fact in our understanding of Carlyle's period of scepticism. It may not be too much to say that the set of his mind was established in Professor John Leslie's mathematics classroom. Leslie was the only teacher he really admired, "the only one of whom he spoke always with real gratitude and affection."¹ Carlyle, at the top of his class, had been well noted by his teacher, who continued in later years to take a special interest in him.² Of Playfair, the professor of natural philosophy, he had a high opinion; it is rather revealing of his accomplishment in this study and his pride of the same, that he should tell Masson years later that he was alone among 131 students in having successfully performed all the required assignments.³

In this final year of his arts course, Carlyle's only courses were mathematics and natural philosophy. Without any evidence of his private reading, it is not possible to say that this restriction describes the whole of his intellectual pursuits. But it is certain that they were at the center of his attention, and were coming to form unconsciously the basis of a theory of knowledge in his mind.⁴ He himself affirms that for several years, until about 1820, geometry was "the noblest of all sciences" to him, to which he gave his "best hours and moods".⁵

1. Masson, op.cit., p.236. Cf. also his comments to Francis Espinasse another Edinburgh University alumnus, in Espinasse, Literary Recollections, London, 1893, p.207.
2. Wilson, i, p.166.
3. Op.cit., p.238
4. Wilson(i, p.116) records Carlyle's purchase of Newton's Principia and his estimation of Newton as the grandest of all mortals. Mathematics was glorified "as if it were a means of moral truth".
5. Froude, i, p.26.

His correspondence with Robert Mitchell (a University student with him) in his teaching years after his arts course is frequently concerned with solutions to problems in mathematics they were putting to each other. As late as 1822 he was occupied in the translation from the French of Legendre's Elements of Geometry to which was attached an introductory essay on the doctrine of proportion, complimented many years later for being "as good a substitute for the Fifth Book of Euclid as could be given in the space, and quite enough to show that he would have been a distinguished teacher and thinker on first principles".¹ This marked the high tide in his concern with mathematics, and was his farewell to the subject.

Little did he realize that the first flow of this tide in his student years would come near to overwhelming him. With all the earnestness of a Calvinist searching the scriptures, he was exploring with fascination the straight, well-defined avenues of mathematics, creating unconsciously for himself a rationalist standard of truth that would finally come to deny the existence of anything beside, above, or beneath those avenues. With a wrench, he was yanked out of the seventeenth century Puritanism of his home and was being brought up to date in the eighteenth century atmosphere of reason which had prevailed since 1690, the date of Locke's Essay. There were no apologists for the faith of the Burghers in his University; indeed, he himself told an inquirer, as he looked back about eighty years of age, that when in Edinburgh he had noticed that

1. A. de Morgan, Budget of Paradoxes, London, 1872, p. 499.

many of the intellectual lights of the time absented themselves from church.¹ This would naturally be the first amazed observation of the young student. In the Summer of 1810, after one session at the University, he was asking his mother, "Did God Almighty come down and make wheelbarrows in a shop?". He was asking too about the meaning of the Song of Solomon, and when given the orthodox answer, demanded, "How is it known that it is Symbolical, representing Christ and the church?" She was horrified, and he, ashamed of his rude doubt, saw that he must say no more. "I saw I must not and so I shut up my thoughts in my own breast".² The sober spirit of his father's faith, allowing nothing that did not accord with truth (identified there with the Bible) was now beginning to be turned upon the faith itself. We shall miss the meaning of Carlyle's scepticism unless we see that its driving force came from the religion it rejected. It was the spirit of Teufelsdröckh: "Truth'...though the Heavens crush me for following her: no Falsehood! though a whole celestial Lubberland were the price of Apostasy".³

That Carlyle had not yet arrived at the point of consciously rejecting Christianity is evident enough from the fact that, in 1813, upon completion of the four years art course, he registered at ^{the} Divinity Hall, the University Faculty for aspiring ministers of the established church. At that time an alternative to regular attendance for four yearly sessions was

1. J.B.Crozier, My Inner Life, London, 1898, p.388.
2. Allingham, op.cit., pp.253, 268.
3. Sartor, p.131.

offered: by registering annually for six years and presenting himself at stated times for required exercises, Carlyle was able to become economically independent by teaching, while still formally preparing for the ministry. However, before accepting the position of teacher of mathematics at his old academy in Annan in May 1814, Carlyle had apparently spent one more winter in Edinburgh, that of 1813-14. It is probable that he was attending some of the lectures at the Divinity Hall and formulating his hostility to official theology at that time.¹ On the side, he was tutoring and attending Jameson's lectures in natural history,² and in May 1814, he is to be found with other students in the gallery of the General Assembly, hearing Jeffrey plead, and Chalmers and others speak-- the only time he ever witnessed this annual event, or, it is likely, cared to.³ Later, in October, away from Edinburgh, and established in Annan, Carlyle confides to his sympathetic friend, Mitchell, whose brief connection with ^{the} Divinity Hall duplicated Carlyle's, "My sentiments on the clerical profession are like yours, mostly of the unfavourable kind. Where would be the harm, should we both stop?"⁴

It is most likely that these unfavorable sentiments had been taking shape in Edinburgh during the preceding winter. It

1. Masson, who has made the most detailed investigation of this period, could not determine with certainty that Carlyle attended divinity lectures. But he surmises with credibility that he did (op.cit.p.251).
2. Wilson, i, p.87.
3. Reminiscences, ii, p.231
4. Early Letters, i, p.19f.

must have been a crucial period in Carlyle's life (though, curiously, it is not so interpreted by either himself or his biographers), for it was the last opportunity for the presentation of orthodox Christianity to stem the tide of his growing scepticism. Instead, it evidently precipitated it. The Divinity Hall was presided over by extraordinarily slight faculty members. There was no one to arrest the roving mind of this brilliant and hypercritical young man. Dr. William Ritchie was the Professor of Divinity, and associated with him were Hugh Meiklejohn, Professor of Ecclesiastical History, and Alexander Brunton, Professor of Hebrew. All three have retired into oblivion, and indeed were at its threshold when Carlyle scornfully contemplated them. One of them Carlyle in his old age wittingly remembered as having "a face red like the setting sun on a misty day-- such a man speaking of the ethereal and the heavenly!"¹ This may have been Professor Ritchie, who in 1813 was aged sixty-five. No doubt it was the same whose gruesome homiletical flourish Allingham recorded from Carlyle's anecdote: "The Devil, after succeeding in his vile machinations, retires to his infernal den and grins in horrid satisfaction!"² Meiklejohn was not a man to appeal to such as Carlyle, with his "smooth round face that never bore any expression but that of good humour and contentment."³

1. Wylie, op. cit., p.399.

2. Allingham, op. cit., p.232. Only a slender memorial, The Life of the Late William Ritchie, D.D., by T. Nelson (Edinburgh, 1830), is left to mark his existence. See pp.69-82 for his rather stormy professorship. His one bequest to posterity has long since been forgotten, a lengthy defense against the Presbytery of Glasgow of the use of an organ in St. Andrew's, Glasgow!

3. Sir Robert Christon's description, quoted in Fasti Ecclesiae Scoticae, the Succession of Ministers in the Church of Scotland from the Reformation, Hew Scott, new edition, vol.i, Edinburgh, 1915, p.190. Data concerning his Divinity Hall colleagues is also given, pp.61, 137.

If Carlyle's scorn of "Hebrew old clothes" is traceable back to a few unpalatable lessons in Hebrew grammar, they would be in Brunton's classroom, an arid enough place, if we can trust the report of Masson, who as a later student got nothing therefrom.¹ The opinion he held of the Divinity Hall when writing to the equally dubious Mitchell in 1817 was no doubt the opinion formed that winter of 1813-14. He called it "one of the most melancholy and unprofitable corporations that has appeared in these parts for a great while . If we are to judge of the kind of Professors we should get from the Edinburgh Kirk by the sample we already possess, it is devoutly to be wished that their visits may be short and far between. It may safely be asserted that though the Doctors Ritchie, junior and senior, with Dr Meiklejohn, Dr Brunton, and Dr Brown, were to continue in their chairs, dozing, in their present fashion, for a century, all the knowledge which they could discover would be an imperceptible quantity--if indeed its sign were not negative. We ought to be somewhat sorry for the Divinity Hall; but our grief need not stop here. If we follow its members into the world, and observe their destination, we shall find it very pitiful. With the exception of the few whom superior talents or better stars exempt from the common fortune, every Scotch Licentiate must adopt one of two alternatives. If he is made of pliant stuff he selects some one having authority, before whom he bows with unabating alacrity for (say) half a score of years, and thereby obtains a Kirk, whereupon he betakes him to collect his stipend, and (unless he think of persecuting

1. Op.cit.,p.251

the Schoolmaster) generally in a few months falls into a state of torpor, from which he rises no more. If, on the other hand, the soul of the Licentiate is stubborn, and delights not to honour the Esquires of the district;-- heartless and hopeless he must drag out his life--without aim or object-- vexed at every step to see surplices alighting on the backs of many who surpass him in nothing but their love for gravy. This is the result of patronage, and this is one of the stages through which every established Church must pass, in its road to dissolution. No government ever fostered a Church unless for its value as a State-engine, and none was ever ignorant of the insecurity of this engine till it is placed upon the rock of patronage. But it ends not here. Though all 'constituted authorities' are ready to admit that Truth is great and will prevail--none have ventured to let their 'true religion' descend unsupported into the arena, and try its hand at mauling the heresies which oppose it. On the contrary, every 'true religion' is propped and bolstered, and the hands of its rivals tied up; till by nursing and fattening it has become a bloated monster that human nature can no longer look upon--and men rise up and knock its brains out. Then there is great joy for a season, and forthwith a successor is selected, which undergoes the same treatment-- and in process of time meets with a similar fate. Such is the destiny of Churches by law established. Let every one of us be contented with it as possible--and gird up his loins to attain unto a share of the plate, whilst the game is good".¹

1. Early Letters, 1, pp.98-100.

During his association with the Divinity Hall, Carlyle had performed two required exercises: a sermon or "trial discourse" in December, 1814, and a Latin discourse a year later. It is unfortunate that neither is extant, a fact due mostly to their author's own unwillingness that they should survive.¹ In both cases there were approbations from professors and fellow-students, which gave him a "slight and momentary sense of pleasure". The text of the sermon was Psalm 119.67: "Before I was afflicted, I went astray, but now have I kept Thy word". He called it, reminiscing, "a very weak and flowery sentimental piece",² but it is worth noting that the text, if chosen by himself, is an indication of an early recognition of the uses of suffering, which later was often enough in his thought, under the Goethean terms of "the sanctuary of sorrow". Suffering he came to see as preliminary to all creativity: it is ordained for the man who is to do anything, be he Dante, a Howard, a Kepler, or a Milton.³

In March 1815 he began to work on the Latin discourse on the question "Num detur Religio naturalis?". Mitchell who gave up thoughts of the ministry sooner than his friend, was asking why he concerned himself with it. He replied, "It is not because I have altered my sentiments about the study of Theology; but principally because it came into my head to try what sort of an essay upon natural religion I could make".⁴

1. H.J.Nicoll, in his biography, Thomas Carlyle, Edinburgh, 1881, p.7n., writing in 1881, stated that the MS. of the sermon "was in existence a few years ago, and perhaps still exists". It is not now to be found in his papers, however; nor is the Latin discourse.
2. Reminiscences, ii, p.20.
3. Latter Day Pamphlets, p.64.
4. Early Letters, i, p.52f.

He had been reading Hume for it. A year before he had expressed himself violently enough about Hume's "bigoted scepticism", his "specious sophisms and...blind prejudice ¹ in favour of infidelity". But now Mitchell had lent him the Essays, and Carlyle's attitude was changing to admiration, though reluctant and qualified. The essay Of Superstition and Enthusiasm elicited frank admiration. Hume's conclusions, he remarked "might be verified by instances with which we are all acquainted". He tells his correspondent that he is delighted with the book and intended to give it a second perusal.

Carlyle continued the rest of his life to reflect Hume and 18th century rationalism in his abhorrence of enthusiasm in religion. While he inveighed against the uselessness of logic, or of the "understanding" (man's specifically rational faculty) in favor of "reason" (his spiritual, intuitive capacity), he came down squarely on the side of an 18th century philosophe when it came to actual judgments upon emotionalism or religious ecstasy. His contempt for the speaking in tongues of Irving's London flock, and of ² "Methodist meetings", as expressed to the American Milburn, shows that he was superior even to attempting to understand

1. Ibid. 1, p.20.

2. Interview of 1860 reported in A.H. Guernsey, Thomas Carlyle, pp.12-18, 21, 26-8, 86-9. Milburn dressed up the sage's words beyond any recognition of the true Carlyle, but probably the essence of the conversation is trustworthy. Cf., also Past and Present, p.117.

such phenomena. Schleiermacher's religion of feeling, in which Sterling tried to interest him, he did not care to investigate. The young divinity student commending Hume's essay Of Superstition and Enthusiasm did not change character in later years.

One would be immensely grateful if Carlyle had seen fit to permit his Latin disquisition to survive. "Is a Natural Religion possible?" was its subject, and leads us immediately to think of Hume's treatment. What answer did the young (aged 20) divinity student give to the question which then and now occupies a prominent place in theological discussion? We have from himself only the testimony that he derived pleasure in turning it into Latin. Obviously, his heart was not in the effort, and it is likely that he was echoing the common opinion in favor of the rational proofs for the existence of God, especially that of design in nature. He would hardly have been commended by the professors of the Divinity Hall had he presented Hume's agnostic scepticism in regard to natural theology! Hume in the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, had argued that the analogy of the effect of the human mind in the intricate design of a product of human workmanship could not with certainty be taken as proof that the design in nature was the effect of a Divine Mind, because the incomprehensible character of God's Being defied analogy.

The sceptic is here curiously allied with the modern opponent of natural theology, in attacking the anthropomorphism which is implicit in the theological argument. The cosmological argument was rendered useless by Hume's well-known

sceptical undermining of the necessity of causal relationships, and the ontological argument was negatively dealt with in short order.¹ Carlyle was profoundly affected by the sceptic Scottish philosophy inspired by David Hume, but December 1815, the time of the presentation of his Latin discourse, is too early for us to discover the nature of his own scepticism.

There was then only the growing conviction that he could not honestly be at home in the church. Even before going to Edinburgh for the discourse, he is telling Mitchell what his friend already knew, that he had "almost come to a determination² about my fitness for the study of Divinity". He did not again present a disquisition at the Divinity Hall. Until late in 1818 he was engaged in teaching at Annan and Kirkcaldy, though far from loving the life. At Annan, the solitariness of his nature gained ground in the face of a society too trivial and stupid to appreciate him. Using his leisure hours for study, he was growing to be a recluse, like Faust, toiling through philosophy and theology, and gaining little. With wry humor, he describes himself as simultaneously "manufacturing

1. "Nothing is demonstrable unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing that is distinctly conceivable implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it". (Quoted by B.M'Ewan, in his edition of the Dialogues, Edinburgh, 1907, p.1).
2. Letter of 11 Dec., 1815, Early Letters, i, p.52.

theses--wrestling with lexicons, chemical experiments, Scottish philosophy, and Berkeleian Metaphysics¹. His main escape during the Annan period was found in the manse of the Reverend Henry Duncan of Ruthwell, where Mitchell was a tutor. Duncan was a remarkable minister, of the Moderate stamp at first, a preacher of "plain moral sermons", and interested in the social welfare of his congregation, so much so that he founded a Savings Bank, and thereby became famous. Midway in his career he was profoundly influenced by the Quakers, and became more evangelical in his emphasis. He and Chalmers were the only contemporary churchmen who elicited Carlyle's deep respect, and neither had a direct enough influence on the wavering young divinity student to guide his course toward the pulpit. Duncan, he wrote half a century later, "was the Amiablest and Kindliest of men, to me pretty much a unique in those young years, the one cultivated man whom I could feel myself permitted to call friend, as well".²

In December, 1816, he did not make his annual appearance in Edinburgh, and the following Spring, half-heartedly knocked on Dr Ritchie's door for the purpose of enrolling for the following year, but, the doctor being inaccessible, as he recalls in the Reminiscences,³ he let it be an omen, and breathed

1. Ibid, p.52.

2. Wilson, i, p.105.

3. ii, p.39.

a sigh of relief. It is remarkable that Carlyle retained his formal association with the Divinity Hall as late as he did. Officially, his name was down in the registration book¹ for the session of 1817-18, but Wilson's explanation of the evidence of the Early Letters and the Reminiscences² validates the month of March, 1817, as the above described date of termination of his practical association with the Divinity Hall and the final abandonment of clerical prospects.

The most crucial event to lead Carlyle away not only from any clerical prospects but from the Christian faith itself was his reading of Edward Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire during the Kirkcaldy teaching period. Edward Irving was another teacher in that town, and, thrown together, their friendship broadened and deepened. Perhaps Irving never quite realized that a mortal blow was given to Carlyle's already tottering faith by books borrowed from his own library, generously offered to his friend. So fascinated was Carlyle with Gibbon's history that he read the twelve volumes in as many days and pronounced it "a work of immense research and splendid execution". After volume one, he was hostile: "I do not like him; his style is flowery; his sarcasms wicked; his notes oppressive, often beastly". But the reading completed, he admitted that the rationalist's style impressed him as "exuberant, sonorous, and epigrammatic", though he classified

1. Masson, op.cit. p.262

2. i, p.96, and ii, p.39 respectively.

him with Hume and Robertson as "destitute of virtuous feeling-- or indeed of any feeling at all". The amused detachment of the sceptic, however able, was repellent to him. Nonetheless, the Decline and Fall had done its damage. "I then first clearly saw that Christianity was not true", he said years later.¹ Carlyle recalled "his winged sarcasms, so quiet, and yet so conclusively transpiercing and killing dead,...often admirably potent and illuminative to me". Masson is another witness to Carlyle's testimony that it was from this reading that "he dated the extirpation from his mind of the last remnant that had been left in it of the orthodox belief in miracles".²

Carlyle at this time must have been exceedingly impressionable to allow the irreverent travesty of Gibbon's fifteenth and sixteenth chapters on Christianity so to affect him. Gibbon in the name of reason had substituted caricature for facts, but he had done it in such a sententious manner that Carlyle, wavering as he then was, and subject as he always was to the power of the aphorism more than the closely reasoned argument, found his family's faith without defence. That Gibbon had sunk deep in him is evidenced in the letter he wrote five years later to Jane Welsh, the remarkable young woman he was courting as a self-appointed tutor. "Gibbon is a man whom one never forgets-- unless oneself deserving to be forgotten; the perusal of his work forms an epoch in the history of one's mind. I know you will

1. Allingham, op.cit., p.147.
2. Masson, op.cit. pp.263,4.

admire Gibbon, yet I do not expect or wish that you should love him. He has but a coarse and vulgar heart, with all his keen logic and glowing imagination and lordly irony: he worships power and splendour; and suffering virtue, the most heroic devotedness if unsuccessful, unarrayed in the pomp and circumstance of outward glory, has little of his sympathy. To the Christians he is frequently very unfair: if he had lived now, he would have written differently on these points. I would not have you love him; I am sure you will not".¹ To Emerson, on the famous visit to Craigenputtock, Gibbon was called "the splendid bridge from the old world to the new".² But later in life, Carlyle was by no means grateful to Gibbon. A reference to him in the Lectures on Literature (1838) is quite contemptuous.³ When, as a very old man, in his eighties, he repeated the exercise of his twenties, reading Gibbon completely through again, it was to reverse his youthful opinion. "I have

1. The Love Letters of Thomas Carlyle and Jane Welsh, edited by Alexander Carlyle, London, 1909, vol.1, pp.186f. This reveals a little alarm on the tutor's part, having received his pupil's comment, "the article on Christianity is really capital" (ibid., p.182). He would not have her religious convictions carried away too quickly, nor his own recommendation of Gibbon as history reading be the instrument of such a thing. He had recommended the work in the first place with a warning: "worth reading...tho' he is an infidel and a rather heartless person" (ibid., p.89)
2. R.W.Emerson, English Traits, Everyman's ed., London, p.8.
3. "With all his swagger and bombast, no man ever gave a more futile account of human things, than he has done of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: assigning no profound cause for these phenomena, nothing but diseased nerves, and all sorts of miserable motives, to the actors in them" (Op cit., ed .by R.P.Karkaria, London, 1892, p.163).

finished Gibbon with a great deduction from the high esteem I have had of him ever since the old Kirkcaldy days, when I first read the twelve volumes of poor Irving's copy in twelve consecutive days. A man of endless reading and research, but of a most disagreeable style, and a great want of the highest faculties (which indeed are rare) of what we could call a classical historian, compared with Herodotus, for instance,¹ and his perfect clearness and simplicity in every part".

It is rather surprising that Carlyle found Gibbon destructive particularly of "the orthodox belief in miracles" rather than the much larger target, the integrity and motives of the pre-Constantine church, which is really the subject of his ridicule. Actually, Gibbon did not address himself directly either to the miracles of Christ or to the primitive Church's claim about his supernatural origin. Obviously in his mind was the rationalist exclusion of all that is not in accordance with "the uniformity of nature", neither defining or distinguishing miracle from magic, and so concluding that both pagans and Christians "concur²ed in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition". It is by implication that belief in

1. Froude, iv, pp 461f. Appended to this excerpt from the journal is the biographer's interesting relation of another reversal of opinion on Carlyle's part. "In earlier years he had spoken contemptuously of the Athanasian controversy, of the Christian world torn in pieces over a diphthong, and he would ring the changes in broad Annandale on the Homocousion and the Homoiousion. He told me now that he perceived Christianity itself to have been at stake. If the A-rians had won, it would have dwindled away into a legend".
2. Vol. ii, p 49, Everyman's, the edition which, interestingly enough, carries Carlyle's own words opposite the title page: "Consider history with the beginnings of it stretching dimly into the remote time; emerging darkly out of the mysterious eternity: the true epic poem and universal divine scripture." (!)

the miracles of the New Testament was undermined, but the¹ implication was enough for Carlyle.

When Carlyle was berating Hume for his "prejudice in favour of infidelity" in 1814, he had probably been reading the Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding with its tenth section On Miracles that had been added to its original form in the Treatise. "To it...(Hume) owed the ill repute he enjoyed alike with the orthodox Presbyterians of Aberdeen and the High Anglican Churchmen of Oxford, the set of Johnson and Wesley."²

As this small section of the Enquiry received the greatest attention in Scotland of any of the attacks of the Enlightenment upon Christian orthodoxy, and must inevitably have made a deep impression upon Carlyle, it is essential that we examine³ it, not as an irrelevant digression, but to point to a significant phase in the drift of Carlyle into scepticism.

1. Cf. L. Stephen. A History of English Thought in the 18th Century, London, 1876, i, 446-58 for an able discussion of Gibbon's superficial contentions, and the amazing fact that no competent rebuttal was offered from orthodox quarters. Miracles were so universally regarded as the principal support for the truth of revelation that when suspicion was thrown upon them in an age of reason, they were not easily defended by the faithful, who in this very hesitation, acknowledged the precariousness of an indefensible obscurantism. To Carlyle, the fearless and witty sceptic was more tolerable than the irrational 'miracle-believers'.
2. A.E. Taylor, David Hume and the Miraculous (the Leslie Stephens Lecture, 1927, Cambridge University), Cambridge, 1927, p.2. Taylor concurs with Hume's editor, Selby-Bigge, in the supposition that Hume was determined to get notoriety at any cost, by this addition, and succeeded very well!
3. Hume, Enquiries, ed. by L. A. Selby-Bigge, second edition, Oxford, 1902., pp.109-31.

Hume begins and ends his essay with friendly (on the surface) references to the Christian religion. In the body of the essay there is only discursive analysis and references to miraculous claims, mostly outside the Christian sphere, but all by implication is addressed to Christianity. At the outset he states that the authority of the Christian tradition rests on the testimony of eye-witnesses, which must be seen as worth less as evidence than the evidence of our own senses. This evidence must be examined in the light of (a) the opposition of contrary testimony; (b) the character and number of the witnesses; (c) the manner of delivering testimony, etc., etc. Developing (a), it is observed that a marvellous event, because it is unusual, is most likely untrue. There is too much contrary evidence against it.¹ Hume says, in effect, that we do not now experience the miraculous, and therefore, this is the conclusive argument against there ever having been any miraculous events. Carlyle, after he had found the faith of Sartor, would have had to order halt at this, the philosopher's starting point. Is it true, we shall hear him constantly asking, that we do not now experience the miraculous? If the answer given to this is yes, is it not because of the prior

1. It seems a harmless enough statement, indicative of the wariness of any rational person against deception. But Hume fails to see that the very character of miracle precisely is that it is contrary to general experience, and that if a mass of "evidence" from common observation were accumulated in support of a miracle, then it would no longer be miraculous, but rather be conformable to general experience after all, and so be only another example of the operation of natural and uniform laws.

Weltanschauung, the "scientific", mechanistic, closed world view which determines the set of the mind, and makes it impossible to be surprised at anything any more? Is not the closed, blind, refusal to believe, of modern man, so prosaically and self-assuredly knowledgeable as to all causes and all effects far more presumptuous than the naive views of an open universe (where anything can happen, under God) held by pre-scientific man? Carlyle, having taken the road of idealism away from 18th century mechanism, came to be the rhapsodic apostle of wonder, who saw the supernatural everywhere in the natural, and was quite understandably set instinctively against the scientific naturalism of the 19th century. For example, the spirit of man was to him a standing miracle, indeed the shekinah of God Almighty, the focal point of the divine revelation, and he, therefore, instinctively, and with abhorrence, turned away from the Darwinian achievements in exploring the never-dreamed-of natural origins of man. He was in error in this, we see now--wrong, but for the right reasons!

Hume's central and unshakeable assumption was as follows: "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience that can possibly be imagined". Miracles are instantly discredited by their nature before any examination or attempt at verification! There follow several pages to show the absence of sufficiently reputable evidence in favor of any miracle, comments on the rise of



miracles from eloquence applied to gullibility and enthusiasm, the universal love of wonder, the universal passion for tale-bearing, and the crowning accusation against a priestcraft, conniving to tell lies "with the best intentions in the world, for the sake of promoting so holy a cause". This sentence may indeed have filled the young Carlyle with horror. Insecure as was his faith, how could he knowingly embrace such hypocrisy? Better to be done with the profession of Christianity as well as the prospect of officially propagating lies. More and more he came to look on the sincere professors of the Christian faith as liars, and the pulpit and the church became ghastly spectacles of hypocrisy.

Hume rests his case on the obvious incredibility of all miracles and adds that their association with religion proves their falsehood beyond cavil. With unbelievable bad taste he suggests that if the claim were made that Queen Elizabeth died, and after being interred a month, rose again to govern England for three more years, its absurdity would be its own destruction, no matter how impressive the evidence, but that if the claim were associated with a religion, this would be an even fuller proof of the cheat. No one could ask for a better aimed allusion.

But the surprise is saved for the end of the essay, when with pretended piety, the philosopher claims that his argument is a defence of the Christian religion, which must be based on faith, not reason. By faith, he means, of course, either gullibility or deliberate unreasonableness, the only definition

conceivable to a rationalist. Calling upon faith to look to itself and be as gullible as possible, he proceeds to ridicule the accumulation of primitive miracles in the Pentateuch, and the implication is that he could, and would, render any other miracles in the Old or New Testaments equally ridiculous.

There is light to be shed on Carlyle's scepticism if we look into this. Hume and Carlyle were both sons of a Calvinist country. In their rejection of the supernatural narratives of Scripture, it is very necessary that we interpret their reaction as in part a result of the Calvinist view of the Bible. As a holy book, all its parts were placed on a flat level of inspiration from cover to cover. The halting by Joshua of the sun in its course was regarded as being on the same level of supernatural phenomena, as the Word made flesh. The indiscriminating acceptance of scripture therefore paved the way in Scotland for the equally indiscriminating rejection of the same. For Hume, to discredit the vast accretion of the miraculous in the Pentateuch was by implication to discredit also all the claims relative to the nature of Christ. From today's perspective we can see the irony: Not an outside force, but Calvinism itself setting up its own stone of stumbling for Carlyle's fall.

Hume, in the mood of the scoffer, had attacked the Christian religion in a manner that must, however, have been offensive to Carlyle, respecting as he did the devotion of his parents. Even today, when orthodoxy is unorthodox, it is offensive. For the purpose, the philosopher of scepticism had conveniently

abandoned his argument destructive of the natural necessity of causal connection between events and asserted the uniformity of nature as a fact sufficient to make it quite unnecessary even to examine any testimony to the miraculous. Carlyle did not see through this glaring inconsistency. Though he protested against the "prejudice" in favour of "infidelity" at the time, it is felt that Hume had done his work.

In spite of Carlyle's frequent criticisms of Hume in later¹ years, he himself reluctantly acknowledged the worth of Hume's "destruction" of orthodoxy. It was only the sceptical impasse which he abhorred. The attack upon the classical proofs for the existence of God in the Dialogues must have left Carlyle convinced as it did Kant, though the latter had other resources for the defence of religion. It is ironic that in this work the very analogy of the world as an ingenious machine, and so made by a mechanical Mind, put forth by the theist Cleanthes, supposedly an irrefutable argument for God's Existence, came in Carlyle's tortured mind to stand for the horror of a dead mechanical universe. A far more fruitful idea of the Dialogues to Carlyle must have been the sceptic Philo's alternative suggestion of the world as an organism with God as the soul. If Carlyle did derive this conception from Hume, it is another case of his failure to acknowledge the source of his ideas. Certainly there is no theme played on more frequently in his writings than this of "organic Filaments", and God at the center of nature.

1. Lectures on Literature, pp.160 ff., etc.

There are two other striking parallels between Carlyle and Hume. One is the sceptical cast of mind which rendered them both agnostics regarding ultimate questions of theology, and highly suspicious of all exclusive claims of revelation. It is not too much to say that the destroyer of rational theism was the father of the evangelist of the gospel of silence, if it is remembered that the poetic character of Carlyle's mind made him of another species than the philosopher of a rational temper. The second parallel is the concentration upon morality. Writing to a friend in 1744, Hume had given his conception of religion: "The practice of morality and the assent of the understanding to the proposition that God exists"¹. Apart from the barren, discursive manner of saying it, and with the substitution of the word "reason" for "understanding", these words might have come from Carlyle himself.

The effect of Gibbon and Hume remained firmly set in Carlyle's mind, even though he came to be the apostle of wonder in Sartor. While he came to see nature itself as supenature, he continued emphatic in his assertion of the unchangeable regularity of nature. Froude, referring in Carlyle's late life to the "special miraculous occurrences of sacred history", drew forth this response: "It is as certain as mathematics that no such thing ever has been or can be"². It is a revealing comparison, for Carlyle, as we

1. H.Burton,Life of Hume, 1,p.162.

2. Wilson,i, p.148.

have seen, was finding everything but mathematical certainty painfully unreliable.

In July, 1818, Carlyle was writing to Thomas Murray, who had just then been licensed to preach, that "he had quitted all thoughts of the church, for many reasons, which it would be tedious, perhaps displeasing, to enumerate". He is quite willing to allow to Murray the high usefulness of a ministry, but absolute sincerity must go with it. When such a one has "subscribed his creed 'with a sigh or a smile' (as Gibbon spitefully remarks)--the less one says of him the better". This letter is a notable one, for it has a cast of depression reflected from the feeling of isolation in Carlyle's mind. "I now perceive more clearly than ever, that any man's opinions depend not on himself so much as on the age he lives in, or even the persons with whom he associates. If his mind at all surpass their habits, his aspirings are quickly quenched in the narcotic atmosphere that surrounds him. He forfeits sympathy, and procures hatred if he excel but a little the dull standard of his neighbors. Difficulties multiply as he proceeds; and none but chosen souls can rise to any height above the level of the swinish herd. Upon this principle, I could tell you why Socrates sacrificed at his death to Esculapius--why Kepler wrote his Cosmographic Harmony, and why Sir Thomas More believed the Pope to be infallible. Nevertheless one should do what he can".¹

1. Early Letters, i, p.164.

Carlyle was beginning to feel the pains of a man who will not accommodate his mind to prevailing belief, pains all the more increased by his conviction that he had been given the talents to do something noteworthy in the world.

At this time, Carlyle was announcing to Mitchell the cessation of his detested activity, a decision which marks the beginning of "four or five most miserable, dark, sick and heavy-laden years".¹ That Summer the two young rebels from the Divinity Hall had been encouraging each other in their unorthodoxy, determining that they were "unfit"...for the study of Theology, as they arrogantly name it. Whatever becomes of us, let us never cease to behave like honest men".² The decision thus taken, not without some dramatic self-consciousness, is properly the seed of Carlyle's interminable expounding of the text of sincerity, a moral quality which he came to elevate as a positive virtue. Much sacrifice was involved in the decision; the disapproval of family and friends must needs be compensated for by the consciousness of loyalty to a high ideal.

Seven years later he was writing of the German Musaeus, in one of the prefaces of German Romance, and no doubt recalling his own experience. "It by no means appears that devotion was at any time the chief distinction of the new candidate (for a country church which finally rejected the applicant on the

1. Reminiscences, i, p.140 (the Froude edition).
2. Early Letters, i, p.194.

ground that he had been seen dancing); and to a simple rustic flock, his shining talents, unsupported by zeal, would be empty and unprofitable as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. At all events, this hindrance closed his theological career; it came in good season to withdraw him from a calling, in which, whether willingly or unwillingly adopted, his history must have been dishonest and contemptible, and his gifts could never have availed him".¹

He continued throughout life to regard the profession of Christianity and the organized church as the vehicles of long discredited incredibilities, adherence to which put a man in danger of losing his soul through hypocrisy. Perhaps the strongest expression given to the reasons for Carlyle's abandonment of the ministry found vent in the Latter-Day Pamphlets, when, at the age of 55, he was more than ever confirmed in his early decision. "Angry basilisks watch at the gates of Law and Church just now; and strike a sad damp into the nobler of the young aspirants. Hard bonds are offered you to sign; as it were, a solemn engagement to constitute yourself an imposter, before ever entering; to declare your belief in incredibilities,--your determination, in short, to take Chaos for Cosmos, and Satan for the Lord of things, if he come with money in his pockets, and horsehair and bombazeen decently wrapped about him. Fatal preliminaries, which deter many an ingenuous young soul, and send him back from the

1. German Romance, i, p.10.

threshold, and I hope will deter ever more".^{1.} There was more than a touch of unfairness in such a blanket judgment, and in the reference to base motives. Unfortunately, Carlyle at this time of his youth was observing with a sharp eye a good many of his contemporaries selling their souls to Satan in the name of God, and he could never forget them.² His revulsion was complete. "His clear intellect had cut down like a knife between him and the theology from which he had departed, leaving no ragged ends".³ By November, 1818, he was back in Edinburgh without prospects, beginning the "sick years". Law was briefly tried, and given up with disgust; tutoring was continued, to keep body and soul together, and even that seemed a doubtful good, the body tortured as it was with dyspepsia, the soul with scepticism.

1. Op.cit., p.189.

2. Supra, p. 38. Cf. also Early Letters, I, pp. 54, 56, 74-6, for other references to probationers of his acquaintance.

3. Masson, op.cit., p.277

CHAPTER THREE.

BATTLE WITH THE MUD - GODS.

"Our Wilderness is the wide World in an
Atheistic Century; our Forty Days are
long years of suffering and fasting:
nevertheless, to these also comes an end".
("The Everlasting Yea", Sartor Resartus,
p. 147).

The period of Carlyle's life dealt with in this chapter falls between 1818 and his marriage to Jane Welsh in October 1826. These eight years saw the ascent from the pit of unbelief to the peak of a new faith. This chapter, like the two foregoing, must give some attention to the factual details relevant to Carlyle's spiritual pilgrimage, and having brought us to his "conversion", give way in the remainder of the study to the treatment of Carlyle's religious thought as evident in his writings chiefly.

The abandonment of the ministry and the teaching profession, and his return to Edinburgh left him without prospects and with little money. He says that his father "behaved to me with princely generosity when I decided on giving up the Church", but his apprehension for his son's future now must have been considerable. There were few anchors to hold him. A trial was made at law in 1819-20, and given up in disgust. For the rest, there were only short-term tutoring engagements, until his appointment in early 1822 as tutor to the two boys of the distinguished Buller family, with whom he remained until the summer of 1824. By this time he was well committed to letters to which he had made his way most tortuously. "The steps by which he was led to live by writing appeared almost

providential, and he often said it was against his will."¹ He began as the humblest of hack writers, for much needed cash, doing translations (that of Legendre already mentioned) and articles for David Brewster's Edinburgh Encyclopedia. By the end of the eight year period, he had become at home in the German language and literature, and had already published a translation of Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1824) and the Life of Schiller (1825), both anonymously.² His last translations, of German romantic writers, were begun in 1825, but not published until a year after his marriage. The uncreative nature of these writings makes it practically impossible to acquire any enlightenment from them as to Carlyle's religious thought during this period. We are dependent more upon the letters, and of course very greatly upon Sartor Resartus. Written 1830-31, this most creative work was fated to gain recognition but slowly. Published at first in serial form in Fraser's Magazine in 1833-34, it gained the approval of only two people, an Irish priest in Cork, and Ralph Waldo Emerson¹ who recognised its merits and had it published in book form in America in 1836, before it could return home to appear to the discerning British public in 1838! A prophet is

1. Wilson, i, p.165.

2. This self-effacing anonymity is a quite remarkable effort of the young writer to conquer vanity, more important to him than wide recognition, which indeed was much later in coming than might have been the case had Carlyle been less humble in the use of his name. In Sartor, Teufelsdröckh speaks of the results of his literary handicraft: "Writings of mine, not indeed known as mine (for what am I)..." (p.159).

not without honor, save in his own country. The understanding of Sartor will be central to our whole study of Carlyle. It is a work of large dimensions, cast in a deliberately grotesque mold, and is as important for its imaginative presentation of Carlyle's religious idealism as it is for his spiritual autobiography. Written humorously as the editing of papers concerning "The Life and Opinions of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh", a fantastic German philosopher-mystic, its reliability as a reflection of Carlyle himself became a critical question for scholars to debate.¹ It is one of the bad inheritances of Froude's carelessness and inaccuracy that critics have had to concern themselves with this trifling issue. The verdict is clear today that Sartor is generally trustworthy as an account of Carlyle's life and opinions.

There are two circumstances of Carlyle's life during the early part of this period which have been given more attention than is proper in the discussion of his spiritual struggles. One was his illness, and the other disappointment in love--the trials of Job and Hosea, added to his scepticism.

The first attacks of an acute digestive disorder began in 1818 and although it had subsided by 1825, the handicap remained with him throughout life,² and provided a handy way for his opponents to charitably discount the denunciatory utterances of

1. The whole critical problem is considered brilliantly and thoroughly by Alexander Carlyle, his nephew, and the careful editor of the Love Letters. See ii, 365ff.
2. In 1871, he was writing to Emerson that he had but "a poor digestive faculty" since he was twenty-three years of age (The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, London, 1883, ii, 339).

his later years. It must be confessed that he did not conceal his complaints. The borderland between his physical pain and his spiritual pain was imperceptible, "every window of your Feeling, even your Intellect, as it were, begrimed and mud-bespattered, so that no pure ray can enter; a whole Drugshop in your inwards: the fordone soul drowning slowly in quagmires of Disgust!"¹ To Irving he wrote, August 14, 1821, "I have had no leisure for many days to think of anything, the pain has so distracted me.... The state of my health you do not believe. My earnest prayer is that you may never believe. I was once as sceptical as yourself. Such disorders are the heaviest calamity life has in store for mortals. The bodily pain is nothing or next to nothing; but alas for the dignity of man! The evil does not stop here. No strength of soul can avail you; this malady will turn that very strength against yourself; it banishes all thought from your head, all love from your heart--and doubles your wretchedness by making you discern it. Oh! the long, solitary, sleepless nights that I have passed--with no employment but to count the pulses of my own sick heart--till the gloom of external things seemed to extend itself to the very centre of the mind, till I could remember nothing, observe nothing! All this magnificent nature appeared as if blotted out, and a grey, dirty, dismal vapour filled the immensity of space; I stood alone in the universe--alone, and as it were a circle of burning iron enveloped the soul--excluding from it every feeling but a

1. Sartor, p. 133.

stony-hearted dead obduracy, more befitting a demon in its place of woe than a man in the land of the living! I tell you, my friend, nothing makes me shudder to the inmost core--nothing but this. One's spirit may be bruised and broken by moral afflictions; but at least it will break like the spirit of a man; moral affections will irradiate its painful strugglings, and the last gleam of feeling will be pure if it is feeble. But here-I declare I will not speak another word on the subject. I can hardly excuse myself for saying so much".¹

Here was a patient well enough aware of the intimate interpenetration of body and mind! Even so, we can imagine the scorn he would have poured upon the school of critics, informed by a behaviouristic philosophy, which attributed the exceptional lack of sweetness and light in his later years to his physical malady.²

1. "Unpublished Letters of Carlyle, "Scribner's Magazine, vol. xiii, April, 1893, p.418.

2. A. Ralli, for instance, leans in this direction. "Carlyle's trouble was dyspepsia; and its reaction on his moral nature was as puissant as Dr. Johnson's hypochondria. It excluded satisfaction with the present, and caused the fear, uneasiness, anxiety, which clad the future for him in sable". "Dyspepsia, by wrecking his nerves and affecting his moral nature, bred in him that 'fear' and anxiety which estranged him from the present and caused idealization of the past". (Guide to Carlyle, London, 1920, pp.343, 350).

Any unhealthy genius is subject to such interpretation. It was true of Pascal as well. H. Peyre's remark is a propos: "A good portion of humanity is not composed of healthy and absolutely normal people. As to the rest, the vision of a Proust or a Pascal continues to be more revealing than that of a healthy optimist who has never suffered from dyspepsia". (Quoted by E. Cailliet, Pascal, Genius in the Light of Scripture, Philadelphia, 1945, p. 79).

Such an attempt to "explain" the anachronism of a Jeremiah in the Age of Progress and Philanthropy is as useless as it is untrue. Only a hasty glance at the satirical strains of the early letters, written before his sickness, is sufficient as a forecast of the sharp tongue of the mature man. As a young man, at the worst period of the illness (1818-25), there is less irritability in his writing than there is in the products of his pen after middle life when he was least afflicted. The truth is that he was destined to be a thorn in the side of 19th century Britain principally by Calvinism and an upbringing under a rigorous father, rather than an ailment of the stomach.

The noteworthy thing is that the development of a deep spiritual life made him capable of using physical suffering as the saints have always used it, shaping even this unmitigated evil into a good. He wrote to his mother in 1825, "Often of late I have even begun to look upon my long dismal seven years of pain as a sort of blessing in disguise. It has kept me clear of many temptations to degrade myself; really when I look back on my former state of mind, I scarcely see how, except by sickness or some most grinding calamity, I could have been delivered out of it into the state proper for a man in this world. Truly, as you say, the ways of that Being who guides our destiny are wonderful, and past finding out. Let us trust that for all of us this will prove the best".¹

1. Froude, 1, p. 295.

The other circumstance, Carlyle's disappointed love, has occasioned endless commentary, for which no one but Carlyle himself is to blame, for in Sartor, he describes the wrestling of Teufelsdröckh with the devil as the immediate effect of a romantic disappointment. "Blumine", the "Flower-Goddess", a further development of Jane Montague, the heroine of Wotton Reinfred, has been variously identified in much scholarly gossip with Margaret Gordon, Kitty Kirkpatrick, or his own wife, Jane Welsh. She is in all probability not any one of them, though the best case is made out for Jane Welsh, with whom his relationship was nearly terminated in 1822 (the year of the "Everlasting No") by a lover's quarrel. It is, however, a relevant fact that in November 1818, Carlyle met Margaret Gordon in Kirkcaldy, only just before his departure, and that her attractiveness aroused a romantic "fancy" for "perhaps some three years",¹ though he saw her last in late 1819 or early 1820. Only two of her letters to Carlyle have been preserved, rather formal and prim, written after Carlyle took unwilling leave of her with a "goodby then" (since it can't be otherwise), and referring to the "weakness" he had had "the noble triumph" of overcoming! Incidentally, her last letter included the best advice he ever received: "Cultivate the milder dispositions of your heart, subdue the more extravagant visions of the brain... Genius will render you great. May virtue render you beloved. Remove the awful distance between you and ordinary men by kind and gentle manners; deal mildly with their inferiority...

1. Reminiscences, ii, p. 57-9).

'Let your light shine before men', and think them not unworthy this trouble".¹ Unquestionably, the abrupt end to Carlyle's hopes for the solace of a woman's love added another dark stroke to the already bleak canvas of his life, and helped to precipitate the "Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh".

This chapter, with the remainder of Sartor's autobiographical Book Two must now have our attention. The romance (whether of Margaret Gordon, or the first stage of his acquaintance with Jane Welsh, now apparently foundering, early in 1822) is described in Sartor as a kind of mocking delusion, a "calenture", like a sick seaman's hallucination of a green island in a waste ocean. Seeing the mockery, Teufelsdröckh (Carlyle) "affects to regard it as a thing natural" and conceals it under "a quite opaque cover of silence". He "buttoned himself together", but inside was a whole Satanic School¹ threatening to erupt. What modern psychiatry calls repression, Carlyle underwent, like "a chimney consuming its own smoke". Teufelsdröckh sets out upon the restless Wanderjahre that depict under the terms of new countries and strange experiences, the miscellaneous activity of the young Carlyle, living but

1. The name was given by Southey to the school of Byron (See his Vision of Judgement, Preface, 1822). In 1821 Carlyle was characterizing "Byronism" as "the reckless wailings, the bitter execrations of existing institutions, the cold derision of human nature, and the meretricious charms, not more dazzling than pernicious, which so deeply infect much of our present literature" ("Metrical Legends of Joanna Baillie", New Edinburgh Review, Oct., 1821, interesting as Carlyle's first published original writing).

without fixed purpose. "Internal Unrest seems his sole guidance". Goethe's Sorrows of Werter and Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre were the literary models here. Teufelsdröckh's first impulse is to find solace in familiar surroundings among his own kin, the instinctive turning to the place and people who gave security to his childhood. Carlyle did often return to his parents' home, but he could not return to the comfort of his family's faith. "There no help awaits him". He is no longer present when family worship is held, and nothing is said. Although his melancholy makes him often "gey ill to deal wi'" (his mother's words in a rare mood of exasperation),¹ much patience is shown toward him. For Carlyle there is nothing more than a wistful hope for dear, dead things.[†] Reading Schiller in preparation for the Life, he is moved by the picture of Karl von Moor in The Robbers. "The scene on the hills beside the Danube, where he looks at the setting sun, and thinks of old hopes, and times 'when he could not sleep if his evening prayer had been forgotten', is one, with all its improprieties, that ever clings to the memory".²

The romantic account of Teufelsdröckh's travels in the mountains has probably its source in the months spent with the Bullers in 1823 at Kinnaird (where he was most Job-like) at the foot of the Pass of Killiecrankie, in just such

1. Wilson, i, p. 198.

2. Life of Schiller, p. 19.

country. Here took place the meditations on nature that became the basis for a kind of loosely-held "theoretical pantheism" in Carlyle's thought (as distinguished from "aesthetical pantheism" which worships with constancy at nature's shrine; Carlyle in later life kept silence, like all country people, on nature's beauty).¹ "Never till this hour had he known Nature, that she was One, that she was his Mother and divine". In the absence of any more articulate thought, he indulged in a vague kind of nature-mysticism, where death and life were one, and "the Spirit of the Earth" and he were holding communion. These were the first stirrings of escape, but were soon drowned in further waves of despair. Life became "wholly a labyrinth; wherein, through long years, our Friend, flying from spectres, has to stumble about at random". Carlyle had written in a letter after the death in 1818 of a close friend, of "that land of darkness, and of the shadow of death, about which so much is hoped or feared and so little understood. Those are mournful thoughts. They come across my mind at times in the stillness of the solitary night, and plunge me into an ocean of fearful conjectures. 'My God', exclaims the melancholy and high-minded Pascal, 'enlighten my soul or take from it this reasoning curiosity'. Montaigne tells us that 'he reposed upon the pillow of doubt'. And there is a day coming--it is even now not far distant--when all mind shall be explained or need no

1. See the satirical passage which like the porter's scene in Macbeth unexpectedly follows the exalted apotheosis of nature, and ridicules the "epidemic, now endemical (in Europe, since the Sorrows of Werter), of View-hunting!"

explanation. I will pursue these reflections no further.

One thing, let us never cease to believe whatever be our destiny--an upright mind is the greatest blessing we can obtain or imagine."¹
The reference to his own anticipation of death shows well enough his sombre thoughts. He tells us, through Teufelsdröckh, that his unbelief became "greatly exaggerated after he gave up law" (the spring of 1820).²

It was at this time that he made the frank confession of his unbelief to Irving, who must have long suspected it. It was during a walk near Drumclog Moss, a place famous in Covenanter history. "It was here, just as the sun was sinking, (Irving) actually drew from me by degrees, in the softest manner, the confession that I did not think as he of Christian Religion, and that it was vain for me to expect I ever could or should".³

1. Early Letters, i, p.161-2.

2. Sartor, p. 97.

3. Reminiscences, ii, p. 90. The fact that for years they had enjoyed the closest intimacy without Carlyle bringing his doubts fully into the light indicates his unusual reticence in speaking of these matters. This was his early training in the practice of silence, which later he preached so frequently--a silence kept so as not to injure those whom plain speaking would wound. The letter he wrote three weeks after this confession is revealing. "For the last three weeks, my conscience has frequently reproached me on your account...Of the two, there is no doubt that I have suffered more severely by my silence. Having no associate; living, I might almost say, only in the abyss of my own thoughts: I cannot without pain, lose sight of one who--widely as we differ on many points--participates more deeply in my feelings than any other I have met with...The remembrance of the days I had spent with you, and the deep matters we had been discussing, gave a colour to my ideas which the aspect of material nature had little power to alter (i.e., as he walked homeward, down the Nith valley)." ("Unpublished Letters of T. Carlyle" in Scribner's Magazine, Apr., 1893).

Irving was at that time Dr. Chalmers' assistant in Glasgow. Carlyle's conversation with Chalmers, whom he respected greatly, only a few days before, may have precipitated the confession to Irving. At an evening party, Chalmers had drawn aside the young man from the trivial drawingroom conversation and "talked earnestly, for a good while, on some scheme he had for proving Christianity by its visible fitness for human nature: 'all written in us already', he said, 'as in sympathetic ink; Bible awakens it, and you can read!' I listened respectfully, not with any real conviction, only with a clear sense of the geniality and goodness of the man".¹ Chalmers' appeal had come seven years too late!

The spring of 1820 is even more important as the time of his reading of Goethe's Faust. He recognized it instantly as the aesthetic expression of himself. In the first flush of enthusiasm he was writing to Irving whom we knew could not share his appreciation--perhaps by way of saying, "Here is a tragedy that will explain the state of my soul as I could not that day at Drumclog Moss!" "Faust is a wonderful tragedy. I doubt if even Shakespeare with all his powers had sadness enough in his nature to understand the arid and withered feelings of a passionate spirit, worn out by excessive studies and the want of all enjoyment; to delineate the chaos of his thoughts when the secrets of nature are bared before him; to depict his horrible volition and the bitter mockery of the

1. Reminiscences, ii, p. 73.

demon that gives scope to that volition".¹ Here was the description of the unhappy recluse, as he had been at Annan,² and ever since. Faust was meditated upon for two years, and in the spring of 1822, Carlyle recorded his appreciation in a review article that, read with its author's condition in mind, appears as a contemporary recording of the struggles he was then undergoing, nine years before Sartor was written.³

The depths of Carlyle's spiritual despair is described in the chapter entitled "The Everlasting No". The mind of this real Faust, characterized by "aimless Discontinuity" and "mad Fermentation", becomes a totally irreligious mind, for "Doubt had darkened into Unbelief...; shade after shade goes grimly over your soul, till you have the fixed, starless, Tartarean black". For him, "the loss of his religious Belief was the loss of everything". Small wonder; a lost Calvinist is lost indeed! The ultimate, terrifying questions were asked: "Is there no God, then?;" "Has the word Duty no meaning?" The "absentee God" of deism had been the best offered to Carlyle,

1. Same letter as above quoted.

In his first letter to Goethe, 24 June, 1824, Carlyle said, "Four years ago when I read your Faust among the mountains of my native Scotland, I could not but fancy I might one day see you, and pour out before you, as before a Father, the woes and wanderings of a heart whose mysteries you seemed so thoroughly to comprehend, and could so beautifully present". (Correspondence Between Goethe and Carlyle, ed. by Norton, London, 1887, p. 2.)

2. See supra p. 43 .

3. See Appendix Two, below, p. 326 .

and he was dimly aware this was only an ironic compensation for his father's God, worse than no God at all. We shall have occasion to refer to the violence of his condemnation of the mechanism of 18th century philosophy and its concomitant deistic theology. The sovereign Lord and never-sleeping Taskmaster, replaced by a remote and theoretical architect of the universe, is an abominable mockery to the young Carlyle even in the depth of his unbelief. Then, as later, he echoes the seer of Patmos in his preference for cold denial to an only lukewarm affirmation of God.¹ "The Atheist is false; yet is there, as we see, a fraction of truth in him; he is true compared with thee; thou, unhappy mortal, livest wholly in a lie, art wholly a lie".²

The hopelessness of his situation was poignant because of the rejection of orthodox belief and the revulsion against any offered substitute. In retrospect, Carlyle saw it as inevitable for two simple reasons: (a) he was not born before the age of Louis XV, and (b) he was not born purely a "Loghead", i.e., a mechanist, or deist. He was born rather in a state of complete protest. "No" was his answer to all the evangels proffered, old or new. "Hope hardly dwelt in me", he wrote years later, remembering this period of negation ... only fierce resolution in abundance to do my best and utmost in all honest ways, and to suffer as silently and stoically as might be, if it proved

1. Rev. iii, 16, 16.

2. "Diderot" (Essays, iii, p.233).

(as too likely!) that I could do nothing. This kind of humour, what I sometimes called of 'desperate hope', has largely attended me all my life. In short, as has been indicated elsewhere, I was advancing towards huge instalments of bodily and spiritual wretchedness in this my Edinburgh purgatory, and had to clean and purify myself in penal fire of various kinds for several years coming, the first and much the worst two or three of which were to be enacted in this once-loved city. Horrible to think of even yet!"¹

Stoicism was one offered substitute made to Carlyle in these years, and against which he revolted, though by no means ever completely, as we shall see.² Teufelsdröckh is made to say, "The Enchiridion of Epictetus I had ever with me, often as my sole rational companion; and regret to mention that the nourishment it yielded was trifling". This was not his opinion when, in 1818, stoicism first appealed to him. Writing to a friend of the uncertainty of his prospects, he said, "Yet wherefore should we murmur? A share of evil greater or less (the difference of shares is not worth mentioning) is the unalterable doom of mortals: and the mind may be taught to abide it in peace. Complaint is generally despicable, always worse than unavailing. It is an instructive thing, I think, to observe Lord Byron surrounded with the voluptuousness of an Italian Seraglio,

1. Reminiscences, 11, p.16.

2. See below pp. 270 - 79.

chaunting a mournful strain over the wretchedness of human life; and then to contemplate the poor but lofty-minded Epictetus-- the slave-- of a cruel master too--and to hear him lifting up his voice to far distant generations, in these unforgotten words: Ἀπαιδέυτου ἔργον, τὸ ἄλλοις ἐγκαλεῖν ἐφ' οἷς αὐτὸς πράσσει κακῶς· ἡργμένου παιδεύεσθαι, τὸ ἑαυτῷ· πεπαιδευμένου, τὸ μήτ' ἄλλῳ, μήθ' ἑαυτῷ.

But truce to moralizing--suffice it, with our Stoic to say, ἀνέχου καὶ ἀπέχου, which, being interpreted, is suffer and abstain".¹ And again, a few months later, to another friend, "You see, my boy, that my prospects are not the brightest in nature. Yet what shall we say? Contentment, that little practised virtue, has been inculcated by saint, by savage, and by sage--and by each from a different principle. Do not fear that I shall read you a homily on that hackneyed theme. Simply I wish to tell you, that in days of darkness--for there are days when my support (pride or whatever it is) has enough to do-- I find it useful to remember that Cleanthes, whose ὕμνος εἰς τὸν Θεόν may last another two thousand years, never murmured, when he laboured by night as a street porter, that he might hear the lectures of Zeno by day; and that Epictetus, the ill-used slave of a cruel tyrant's as wretched minion, wrote that Enchiridion which may fortify the soul of the latest inhabitant of the Earth. Besides, though neither of these men had adorned their species, it is morally certain that our earthly joys or

1. Early Letters, i, pp. 165,6.

griefs can last but for a few brief years; and, though the latter were eternal, complaint and despondency could neither mitigate their intensity nor shorten their duration. Therefore my duty, and that of every man, on this point, is clear as light itself".¹

These extracts tell us what nourishment he did get from classical stoicism. However, only a few weeks later, to still another friend, he is writing, "About the end of 1816, I remember informing you, that, in the space of two years, my views of human life had considerably altered. A similar period has again elapsed and brought with it a change less marked indeed, but not the less real. Till not very long ago, I imagined my whole duty to consist in thinking and endeavouring. It now appears that I ought not only to suffer but to act."² Connected with mankind by sympathies and wants which experience never ceases to reveal, I now begin to perceive that it is impossible to attain the solitary happiness of the Stoic--and hurtful if it were possible. (Rien ne doit tant diminuer la satisfaction que nous avons de nous-mêmes, que de voir que nous désapprouvons dans un temps ce que nous approuvions dans un autre, is the unpleasant but faithful observation of La Rochefoucault). How far the creed of Epictetus may require to be modified, it is not easy to determine: that it is defective seems pretty evident. I quit the stubborn dogma, with a regret heightened almost to remorse: and feel it to be a

1. Ibid., pp. 184,5.

2. He had just abandoned teaching (a suffering profession) and was contemplating writing (an acting one)!

desire rather than a duty to mingle in the busy current which is flowing past me, and to act my part before the not distant day arrive, when they who seek me shall not find me. What part I shall act is still a mystery..."¹

H. D. Traill describes Sartor as the account of "his ultimate winning to that bleak but at least inhabitable island of the Stoics whereon he spent the remainder of his days,"² but so unequivocal a label as "Stoic" is not to be stamped on Carlyle if we take seriously Teufelsdröckh's dissatisfaction with Epictetus and the last letter extract given above. What considerable element of stoicism remained, and its close connection with Calvinism we shall have to consider later in more detail.

There was only one thing that apparently alleviated his distress: he was saved from outright philosophical scepticism. Relativism, the demon of much modern unbelief, the suspicion that there is or can be no truth that is true for all men, fortunately did not plague him. "One circumstance I note",

1. Ibid., pp.206,7. Wilson (i,p.161), with characteristic insensitivity, calls this way of speaking (at the end of the letter) a "make-believe melancholy", a pious inheritance. Has he read Sartor? Carlyle's letters all through this period, and indeed, all through life, are full of quite genuine references to the imminence of death and the brevity of life, emphatic (not make-believe) according to the seriousness of the moment--good Calvinist that he was!
2. In his introduction to Sartor in the Centenary Edition, p. xviii.

says Teufelsdröckh, "after all the nameless woe that Inquiry, which for me, what it is not always, was genuine Love of Truth, had wrought me, I nevertheless still loved Truth, and would bate no jot of my allegiance to her". In this, as he looked back, he was the servant of God even while doubting His existence. But perhaps if we look at this "love of truth" more critically, we shall see that even it was not an unmixed blessing, for it contained one source of his agony.

The woman who wrote to him in June, 1820, "Remove the awful distance between you and ordinary men", could not have known that he was then reading Faust. She had with a feminine heart and the clear eye of a good judge of character seen the terrible isolation that accompanied his particular genius: the absolute passion for the conquest of truth. His love of truth made his hatred of the false and the half-true (what he later scornfully called "hearsay") proportionately fierce. And so, since falsehood and half-truths provide the mental furniture of nearly all men, he was brought perilously close to the point of despising his own kind. The victims who quivered under the lash of this man knew only that he could despise like Zeus on Olympus, but too few of them realized that this was only the consequence of an equally Zeus-like passion for truth and justice.

Wherever there is human greatness of any kind, there is a sin peculiar to it parasitically attached, as a certain fungus can grow only on a particular tree. If a Magdalene

is capable of loving greatly and being loved, it is her peculiar lot to be attacked by the seven devils of sensualism. If it is a Faust or a Carlyle capable of achieving greatness in the search for truth, it is his lot to be attacked by a superhuman pride of mind, usurping idolatrously and disastrously the place of Him who alone is Truth. Unknown to the ordinary man, it is the peculiar sin of the inquirer, battenning on his greatness, and only when the parasite has sucked nearly all the life from its host, does it become obvious as an evil thing. "Truth! though the Heavens crush me for following her", cried Teufelsdröckh, stretching out his mind like the wings of a disdainful archangel soaring over common mortals. He thought this a divine hunger, pure, the noble thing, the thing that kept his head above utter despair, when actually it was the source of his agony.¹ The libido sciendi that Pascal² knew so well, the Faustian passion, corrupts the man who is intent upon grasping the

1. Reinhold Niebuhr has thus exposed the precarious position of the devotee of "truth": "The philosopher is anxious to arrive at the truth; but he is also anxious to prove that his particular truth is the truth. He is never as completely in possession of the truth as he imagines. That may be the error of being ignorant of one's ignorance. But it is never simply that. The pretensions of final truth are always partly an effort to obscure a darkly felt consciousness of the limits of human knowledge. Man is afraid to face the problem of his limited knowledge lest he fall into the abyss of meaninglessness. Thus fanaticism is always a partly conscious, partly unconscious attempt to hide the fact of ignorance and to obscure the problem of scepticism". (The Nature and Destiny of Man, New York, 1941, vol.i, pp. 184,5).
2. See Appendix One for comment on Pascal and Carlyle.

truth, rather than receiving it and worshipping at its Source. Only when truth is received gratefully as the token of Divine Grace can man either be humbly aware of his only fragmentary possession of the truth, or tender toward his fellows who possess even less than he. It is the tragedy of Carlyle that he never became aware of the particular idolatry of the Truth-seeking Man. He experienced profoundly enough the barriers of human knowledge, announced his defeat, abjuring the command "Know thyself", and found what he thought was a purer gospel, but was in reality partly an escape: "Know what thou canst work at."¹ Activism can be a drug to subdue the pain of doubt. His passion was frustrated, rather than humiliated, tamed and reconsecrated.

If, in writing to a friend at the beginning of this period,² he had been able to quote Montaigne's remark that he "reposed upon the pillow of doubt", he could not now. In "The Everlasting No" there is no repose; to the sleepless Carlyle doubt was no pillow! When he actually came in these years (1820-1823) to write the encyclopedia article on this famous doubter, he is conspicuously silent on his religious scepticism,³ as if this was a matter upon which he himself was too confused to speak. Writing Wotton Reinfred in 1827, immediately after escape into the "Everlasting Yea" he could

1. Sartor, p.132.

2. Early Letters, i, p.162.

3. J.R. Lowell first noticed this (My Study Windows, Camelot Classics, London, 1886, p.167).

see that the speculation of this Faustian epoch had been the origin of doubt, that idleness (he meant unused talents) was the mother of unbelief.¹ But now he could not see it. These unused talents only gave him an acute sense of feebleness. Without an absorbing work he felt unworthy. "'Alas', says Teufelsdröckh, 'the fearful Unbelief is unbelief in yourself'".

Carlyle had experienced the usual illusions about fame as a young man. Conscious of unique genius, he had once confessed to a friend that he had "dreams of intellectual greatness and of making me a name on the earth."² But with little stimulating employment of his powers, he suffered a feeling of bitterness toward an inhospitable world.³ This stinginess of the world with its recognition, his inheritance from Calvinism of a condemnation of vanity, together with the help of Goethe⁴ and Schiller brought him to his senses and proved to him that fame was a deceitful will-o-the-wisp, and that only inner worth mattered.⁵

1. Op.cit., p.10.

2. Early Letters, i, p.163.

3. See same letter, supra, p. 56 .

4. Cf. Love Letters, ii, pp.200-1: "'Fame!' says my old Goethe: 'as if a man had nothing else to strive for but fame! As if the attainment of harmony in his own spirit, and the right employment of his faculties, required to be varnished over by its influences on others before it could be precious to himself!'"

5. It is interesting to see his violent reaction to an extravagant yearning for fame (for herself, not for her lover!) expressed by Jane Welsh. "Will you also let me say that I continue to lament this inordinate love of Fame that agitates you so; and which, as I believe, lies at the root of all this mischief. I think this feeling unworthy of you: it is far too shallow a principle for a mind like yours. Do not imagine that I make no account of a glorious name: I think it the best of external rewards, but never to be set in competition with those that lie within... No man ever became famous, entirely, or even chiefly from the love of fame". (Ibid., i, pp.156,7).

It may seem surprising that Humilitate is the conspicuous word of his Ecclefechan gravestone. In his utterance, Carlyle was deficient in humility, of all qualities. But for this very reason, his striving for it was all the more intense. The qualities we most need we usually admire the most. The man who wrote the Latter-Day Pamphlets could also tell himself in his journal, "On the whole, art thou not among the vainest of living men? At bottom among the very vainest? Oh, the sorry, mad ambitions that lurk in thee! God deliver me from vanity, from self-conceit, the first sin of this universe, and the last, for I think it will never leave us".¹

Teufelsdröckh, continuing, describes the deadening of his sympathy with others, which accompanies the feeling of his own worthlessness. "The men and women around me, even speaking with me, were but Figures. I had, practically, forgotten that they were alive, that they were not merely automatic. In the midst of their crowded streets and assemblages, I walked solitary".² Faust was ironically envied because he, at least, had a very intimate devil to communicate with, "but in our age of Downpulling and Disbelief, the very Devil has been pulled down, you cannot so much as believe in a Devil. To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb. O, the vast, gloomy, solitary Golgotha, and Mill

1. Froude, ii, p.348.

2. "alone

In an over-crowded desert, jostled by ghosts".
(T.S. Eliot, The Family Reunion, scene i).

of Death!"

The uniting of this ultimate of despair with persistent physical pain brought even the thought of suicide into his mind. If he had not been able to vomit up these poisonous thoughts into his journal, they might have mastered him.¹

1. December 31, 1823: "The year is closing. This time eight and twenty years I was a child of three weeks old, sleeping in my mother's bosom.

Oh! little did my mither think
That day she cradled me,
The lands that I should travel in,
The death I was to dee.

Another hour and 1823 is with the years beyond the flood. What have I done to mark the course of it? Suffered the pangs of Tophet almost daily; grown sicker and sicker; alienated by my misery certain of my friends, and worn out from my own mind a few remaining capabilities of enjoyment; reduced my world a little nearer the condition of a bare, rugged desert, where peace and rest for me is none. Hopeful youth, Mr C! Another year or two and it will do. Another year or two and thou wilt wholly be--this caput mortuum of thy former self; a creature ignorant, stupid, peevish, disappointed, broken-hearted, the veriest wretch upon the surface of the globe. My curse seems deeper and blacker than that of any man: to be immured in a rotten carcase, every avenue of which is changed into an inlet of pain, till my intellect is obscured and weakened, and my head and heart are alike desolate and dark. How have I deserved this? Or is it mere fate that orders these things, caring no jot for merit or demerit, crushing our poor mortal interests among its ponderous machinery, and grinding us and them to dust relentlessly? I know not. Shall I ever know? Then why don't you kill yourself, sir? Is there not arsenic? is there not ratsbane of various kinds? and hemp? and steel? Most true, Sathanas, all these things are; but it will be time enough to use them when I have lost the game which I am as yet but losing. You observe, sir, I have still a glimmering of hope; and while my friends, my mother, father, brothers, sisters live, the duty of not breaking their hearts would still remain to be performed when hope had utterly fled... I do not design to be a suicide. God in heaven forbid!" (Froude, 1, p.200).

Teufelsdröckh professes that "a certain aftershine of Christianity" withheld him from the final act of despair.¹ What restrained Carlyle is akin to what restrained Faust, when with the cup of poison at his lips, he was stopped by the sound of the Easter hymn. Carlyle's own comment on this scene of the tragedy was applicable to himself. "The remembrance of many happy days of pious childhood breaks through that of the agitated and unhallowed scenes which have succeeded."²

The description of his vague, unmeasured, unlimited despair has become a classic expression of the melancholy of total unbelief. "Having no hope, neither had I any definite fear, were it of Man or of the Devil: nay, I often felt as if it might be solacing, could the Arch-Devil himself, though in Tartarean terrors, but rise to me, that I might tell him a little of my mind. And yet, strangely enough, I lived in a continual, indefinite, pining fear; tremulous, pusillanimous, apprehensive of I knew not what; it seemed as if all things in the Heavens above and the Earth beneath would hurt me; as if the Heavens and the Earth were but boundless jaws of a devouring monster, wherein I, palpitating, waited to be devoured".³

1. "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price". (I Cor.vi. 19,20)
2. "Goethe's Faust" in New Edinburgh Review, vol. ii, April, 1822, pp. 316ff.
3. "The world was dead around me...I was to myself as a frightful mistake; a spectre in the middle of breathing men, an unearthly presence, that ought not to be there" (Wotton, p. 6).

It was while in this state of mind that the famous incident of the Rue Saint Thomas de l'Enfer occurred. The name of the street is as suggestive as that of the hero of Sartor. There is actually a street in Paris called the Pas d'Enfer which Carlyle may have noted in his 1824 visit. He adds his own name with the title of saint and gets this grotesque result: Saint Thomas of the Inferno! i.e., Thomas Carlyle versus the Devil, reminiscent of St. George versus the dragon.¹ "Full of such humour, and perhaps the miserablest man in the whole French Capital, or Suburbs, was I, on sultry Dog-day, after much perambulation, toiling along the dirty little Rue Saint Thomas de l'Enfer, among civic rubbish enough, in a close atmosphere, and over pavements hot as Nebuchadnezzar's Furnace; whereby doubtless my spirits were little cheered; when, all at once, there rose a Thought in me, and I asked myself: 'What art thou afraid of? Wherefore, like a coward, dost thou forever pip and whimper, and

1. Most of the readers of Sartor miss the "serious humor" of its symbolic nomenclature. The hero's prodigious Christian name is that of the radical Cynic famous for his caustic protests against pretension. Sartor is just that, a protest against the Devil (Cf. pp.68ff and 96-- "A Thinking Man is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have"), and a penetration of the popular pretension of "externals" (clothes). "Teufelsdröckh" (Devil's dirt) is the German for assafoetida. "I sometimes think the book will prove a kind of medicinal assafoetida for the pudding stomach of England and produce new secretions there", he wrote to his doctor brother (Froude, ii, p.159). Sartor Resartus (The Tailor Patched, or Reclothed) as a title was not added for two years after the MS. was completed, and is not precisely definable. As the book deals with the "philosophy of clothes" (matter the vesture of spirit), it suggests that even the tailor's clothes are to be looked into, a radical enough intention!

go cowering and trembling? Despicable biped! what is the sumtotal of the worst that lies before thee? Death? Well, Death; and say the pangs of Tophet too, and all that the Devil and Man may, will or can do against thee! Hast thou not a heart; canst thou not suffer whatsoever it be; and, as a Child of Freedom, though outcast, trample Tophet itself under thy feet, while it consumes thee? Let it come, then; I will meet it, and defy it!' And as I so thought, there rushed like a stream of fire over my whole soul; and I shook base Fear away from me forever. I was strong, on unknown strength; a spirit, almost a god. Ever from that time, the temper of my misery was changed: not Fear or whining Sorrow was it, but Indignation and grim fire-eyed Defiance.

"Thus had the EVERLASTING NO (das ewige Nein) pealed authoritatively through all the recesses of my Being, of my ME; and then was it that my whole ME stood up, in native, God-created majesty, and with emphasis recorded its Protest. Such a Protest, the most important transaction in Life, may that same Indignation and Defiance, in a psychological point of view be fitly called. The Everlasting No had said: 'Behold, thou ~~art~~ fatherless, outcast, and the Universe is mine (the Devil's)'; to which my whole Me now made answer: 'I am not thine, but Free, and forever hate thee!'

"It is from this hour that I incline to date my Spiritual New-birth, or Baphometric Fire-baptism; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a Man".

It was the first time he had dared to look up from the

place of despair, as such very memorable to him. Although Teufelsdröckh calls it his "Spiritual New-birth or Baphometric Fire-baptism",¹ we would be wrong to attach any more significance to it than this, that it was a kind of inner explosion demolishing fear. He had discovered that mysterious resource of the human spirit that shows itself in the common phenomenon of a desperate man declaring that "they can do no more than kill me".² No psychiatrist familiar with this phenomenon could have better described it than Carlyle: "Thus sometimes it is even when your anxiety becomes transcendental, that the soul first feels herself able to transcend it".³ It was emphatically not a conversion,⁴ but a bold self-assertion; it was indeed, in its character of defiance, rather the opposite of the Christian meaning of conversion, which denotes a surrender of the self. As a turning point, it was merely a ceasing to cringe,⁵ but as such it was the indication of greater things to follow, the discovery of a faith and of some peace.

1. An allusion to Baphomet, the imaginary god or idol alleged to have been worshipped by the Templars in a form of Gnosticism, where spiritual illumination was emphasized. Cf. Century Dictionary.
2. "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke xii.4).
3. Sartor, p. 113.
4. Froude (i, p.101) was mistaken to call it a "conversion" or "new-birth".
5. W. Leopold calls it an "awakening", quoted and taken as definitive by Harrold (op. cit., p.42) who comments: "It was evidently an awakening of his whole manhood against despair, a sudden realization of great inner resources with which to front a mechanical and hostile world.... Carlyle's sudden experience was the emancipation from self-doubt, the awakening of his ego, the discovery of his self".

By no means did it release Carlyle from all spiritual wrestling. It was not even an absolutely permanent achievement. The journal entry on suicide was made eighteen months later, Dec. 31, 1823.¹

It is well known, of course, that this was a definite emotional event in Carlyle's life. It is even dateable,² and the fictitious rue in Paris is Leith Walk in Edinburgh, somewhere below Pilrig Street. In 1866, in a note on a German biographical article³ he commented: "Nothing in Sartor thereabouts is fact⁴ (symbolical myth all) except that of the 'incident in the Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer',--which happened quite literally to myself in Leith Walk, during those three weeks of total sleeplessness,⁵ in which almost my one solace was that of a daily bathe on the sands between Leith and

1. See supra, p. 83.
2. Froude's placing it in June, 1821, has been corrected by A. Carlyle on good evidence, to some-time in late July or early August, 1822. (Love Letters, ii, pp.381,2).
3. F. Althaus, "Thomas Carlyle. Eine biographisch-literarische charakteristik" in Unsere Zeit, Leipzig, July, 1866, pp. 1-41.
4. The careless omission of a single word by Froude (i,p.101) threw any number of critics off the scent until corrected twenty-seven years later by A. Carlyle. He had misquoted: "Nothing in Sartor is fact". The vital word omitted was intended by Carlyle to confine his comment probably to such details as the "French Capital or Suburbs" or the name of the street.
5. Writing to Jane Welsh, July 13, 1822, he calls himself a "craven", i.e., a completely defeated person. (Love Letters, i, p.67).

Portobello. Incident was as I went down (coming up I generally felt a little refreshed for the hour); I remember it well and could go yet to about the place". He adds that he had been "solus, wandering as in endless labyrinths, flinty, muddy, thorny, under a sky all leaden."

That this successful battle with fear was determinative of his continuing to extol the old Roman virtues can hardly be doubted. In 1840 he was telling the auditors of his lectures on heroes, "The first duty of a man is still that of subduing Fear. We must get rid of Fear; we cannot act at all till then. A man's acts are slavish, not true but specious; his very thoughts are false, he thinks too as a slave and coward, till he have got Fear under his feet".¹

Wilson asserts² that Carlyle often said the "Everlasting No", the quelling of the ultimate fear--the fear of death, had been suggested by an event six years prior to the Leith Walk incident. It was the death of his Uncle Thomas in the summer of 1816, when he was at home after the two unhappy years at Annan. He vividly described the impressiveness of the death to one of his Boswells when he was nearly eighty-three. He had looked up to this uncle "with the greatest admiration and respect". "In the middle of the night it became clear that my uncle was dying. He fixed his eyes upon me with a wild stare--bright blue eyes--and tried to lift his head from the pillow,

1. Heroes and Hero-worship, p.32.

2. Vol.i, p. 118, but the evidence is not given.

but could not do it, and the eyes kept wide open till life went out of them--ah dear!--it was about three in the morning. It was then I first began to make reflections about death."¹ It was probably this shocking encounter with the spectre Death, that is alluded to in Sartor, and which made the quotation from Euripides so meaningful to him: "Whoso can look on Death will start at no shadows".² The achievement of the "Everlasting No" was that Teufelsdröckh could now look on even his own death with defiance.

Under the power of this "fire-baptism", the soul of Teufelsdröckh is even less at peace, but it "feels its own Freedom....: the citadel of its whole Kingdom it had thus gained by assault, and will keep inexpugnable; outwards from which the remaining dominions, not indeed without hard battling, will doubtless by degrees be conquered and pacificated".

The incidents of Teufelsdröckh's wanderings, described in the chapter "The Centre of Indifference" provided Carlyle with an opportunity for some disconnected reflections which need not concern us. He does observe of this period³ that "for the matter of spiritual culture, if for nothing else, perhaps few periods of his life were richer than this. Internally, there

1. Allingham, op.cit., pp. 267-8. The death occurred on June 9, 1816, and on July 15, he was writing to Mitchell, "I have been extremely melancholy, during the last six weeks, upon many accounts", characteristically not mentioning this specific cause (Early Letters, i, p.69).
2. Sartor, p.122. The embryo of the "Everlasting No" is in Wotton (p.119): "'After all', said he, 'what have I to lose? My integrity is mind, and nothing more. Who fears not death, him no shadow can make tremble'".
3. We may date it summer, 1822 to summer, 1826, during which time Carlyle does "wander", to the Highlands, to London and the Midlands, to Paris.

is the most instructive Course of Practical Philosophy, with Experiments, going on".

Above all, he is becoming acquainted with German literature at this time. "The great Schiller and greater Goethe" seem to him "the inspired tests of that divine BOOK OF REVELATIONS". Having read Schiller he is beginning to write his critical biography in March, 1828, and soon after, undertakes the translation of Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship. The reading of the latter had made a deep impression upon him, so that he could tell a friend years later, that having been "plunged into miserable doubts and speculations" he had been delivered by "German writings" and in particular Wilhelm Meister. "I remember taking a long walk one evening from my lodgings near the College to Coates Crescent--there were no houses there then--when the full meaning of it burst upon me".¹ This walk is described in the Reminiscences. "My sally out after finishing (Wilhelm Meister), along the vacant streets of Edinburgh (a windless, Scotch-misty Sunday night) is still vivid to me: 'Grand, surely, harmoniously built together, far-seeing, wise and true: when, for many years, or almost in my life before, have I read such a Book?'"² "I have not got as many ideas from any book for six years", he wrote to Jane Welsh.³ Could he have meant "not since reading Gibbon"? For that took place exactly six years before. But what a different harvest of ideas! It was

1. Wilson, i, p. 221.

2. Vol.ii, p. 115.

3. Love Letters, i, p. 357.

not that Wilhelm Meister appealed to him as a superb work of art. On the contrary, he warned readers in his translator's introduction that "the hero is a milksop", that "in many points, both literary and moral, (he) could have wished devoutly that he had not written as he had done", but nevertheless he must have been thinking of himself when he recommended it: "to those who have penetrated to the limits of their own conceptions, and wrestled with thoughts and feelings too high for them, it will be pleasing and profitable to see the horizon of their certainties widened, or at least separated with a firmer line from the impalpable obscure which surrounds it on every side". He describes it as "a light airy sketch of the development of man in all his endowments and faculties, gradually proceeding from the first rude exhibitions of puppets and mountebanks, through the perfection of poetic and dramatic art, up to the unfolding of the principles of religion, and the greatest of all arts, the art of life" Goethe's "aesthetic morality" did not escape Carlyle's later criticism, but in his first enthusiasm he was grateful to it, as an answer to many questions which in the next chapter we shall examine. Soliloquizing at this time in his journal, he asked, "What should I think of Goethe? His Wilhelm Meister instructed, disgusted, moved and charmed me. The man seems to understand many of my own aberrations, the nature and causes of which still remain mysterious to myself. I do feel that he is a wise and great man".

1. Two Notebooks of T.C., ed. by C.E. Norton, New York, 1898, p. 32.

The "Centre of Indifference" was not any cultivated stoic apatheia, but only the ceasing to strive of a defeated man, a false calm. As Carlyle analyzed it, it stood for his indifference to the universe's refusal to grant him his wishes: health, happiness, work fame. He was reduced to an irrelevance, "a dissevered limb".¹ His desires had been frustrated, but the frustration had brought knowledge of two things: that this was the common lot of never-contented mankind (an Alexander will weep because he has not two planets to conquer); and that under the immensity of time's aeons and heaven's space, man's insignificance--sitting whimpering in "this paltry little Dog-cage of an Earth"--does not warrant his claiming anything. No wonder that Job was his favorite Biblical book; the story of an utterly frustrated man whose inordinate protests are silenced by the voice out of the whirlwind, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundation of the earth? Declare, if thou hast understanding".² Thus subdued, Carlyle was prepared for a greater experience.

The discovery of faith is described in "The Everlasting Yea". There we see Carlyle's analysis of the human problem as the struggle of the infinite human spirit against a finite world. "Our life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom, than

1. "At present I am but an abgerissenes Glied), a limb torn off from the family of Man, excluded from activity, with Pain for my companion and Hope that comes to all rarely visiting me, and what is stranger, rarely desired with vehemence" (Two Notebooks, p. 30).

2. Job xxxviii.4.

Voluntary Force: thus have we a warfare". There is in man a divinely given urge to create in freedom--but it is bound by a natural ring of necessity. Two commands strive for dominance: the one from God, "Work thou in well-doing", the other from the "clay", "Eat thou and be filled". This is the struggle of every "temptation in the wilderness"--God's Will versus bread, fame, and power.

The soul-drama of all "sufficient men" had been his, a first act of youthful enthusiasm ("dreams of intellectual greatness"); a second, of "disappointment in thought and act" taking place^h against a backdrop of an age of unbelief; and a third, of "Doubt gradually settled into Denial". Carlyle's criticism of this drama is that the first act was foolish, unwarranted; the second was to be expected, and not mourned over; and the third could have been avoided!

Ceasing to struggle for his "rights" against an unobliging universe, "as I lay in that Centre of Indifference: cast, doubtless by benignant upper Influence, into a healing sleep, the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and I awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth. The first preliminary moral Act, Annihilation of Self (Selbst-tödtung), had been happily accomplished; and my mind's eyes were now unsealed, and its hands ungyved".

The question of the origin of evil is a practical one for every man--a strangling knot to be unfastened before he is free. The way it is unfastened changes, says Carlyle,

from century to century, meaning that orthodox institutional Christianity spoke once to man's need, but does not now.

"The authentic Church-Catechism of our present century has not yet fallen into my hands", he writes, but he offers this substitute: "Man's Unhappiness...comes of his Greatness; it is because there is an Infinite in him, which with all his cunning he cannot quite bury under the Finite". It is quite impossible for man to be made happy by the satisfaction of his desires, for in the end, man wants no less than "God's infinite Universe altogether to himself". This pursuit of happiness ¹ is supposedly based on every man's right to be happy. Considering that every man has such "a fund of Self-conceit", that his own estimation of his rights is quite unlimited, then, whatever is given to him, he will judge himself ill-used. The only cure is to reduce one's demands to nothing. "The Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your Numerator as by lessening your Denominator. Nay, unless my Algebra deceive me, Unity itself divided by Zero will give Infinity. Make thy claim of wages zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet". The renouncing of man's claims is the basis of his peace. The answer from the whirlwind to Carlyle was substantially the same as to Job. "Foolish soul! What Act of

1. Jefferson's words in the famous American Declaration of Independence (1776) are a typical expression of 18th century utilitarianism. "We hold these truths to be self-evident - that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness".

Legislature was there that thou shouldst be Happy? A little while ago thou hadst no right to be at all.... Close thy Byron; open thy Goethe". "Applied Christianity" is the abandonment of our greedy contentions with our brothers, and if some "too-ravenous individual" is intent upon another's share, it is better that he have it than to resist. "We have here not a Whole of Duty of Man, yet a Half Duty, namely the Passive half; could we but do it, as we can demonstrate it". The active half, i.e., putting aside barren speculation, and "doing the duty which lies nearest" is the rest. The amazing discovery is that a man's salvation through work lies ready to hand in a quite tangible task that need not be looked for far and wide. Lothario's words in Wilhelm Meister are quoted, "America is here or nowhere". The chapter (indeed, it is the outcome of Carlyle's whole religious inquiry) ends with a peroration on work: "Up, up! Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work". Action, not contemplation, is the effect of the vision.

It is through renunciation, annihilation of self, that an illegitimate pursuit of happiness is replaced by a higher blessedness. "Love not pleasure; love God. This is the Everlasting Yea, wherein all contradiction is solved; wherein whoso walks and works, it is well with him".

This was the genuine conversion of Carlyle, not sudden like the incident in Leith Walk, but a slow awakening to the truth, influenced by his reflection on Wilhelm Meister and

culminating in the peace of Hoddam Hill. He had left Edinburgh to live in the rural seclusion of this pleasant farm near Ecclefechan, occupied 1825-26. This is the high "table-land" with views of distant mountains, described in Sartor and recognizable by anyone who has visited there. Prepared as he had been by the experience of nature's beauty in the Highlands, with Job's protests now silenced, he was ready now to respond to the natural influences of earth and sky. Years later he wrote, "This year at Hoddam Hill has a rustic beauty and dignity to me; and lies now like a not ignoble russet-coated Idyll in my memory; one of the quietest on the whole, and perhaps the most triumphantly important of my life. I lived very silent, diligent, had long solitary rides...; my meditations, musings, and reflections were continual; thoughts went wandering...through Eternity, through Time, and through Space, so far as poor I had scanned or known;--and were now, to my endless solacement, coming back with tidings to me! This year I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering Mud-gods of my Epoch; had escaped, as from a worse than Tartarus, with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires; and was emerging, free in spirit, into the eternal blue of ether,--where, blessed by Heaven, I have, for the spiritual part, ever since lived....What my pious joy and gratitude then was, let the pious soul figure. In a fine and veritable sense, I, poor, obscure, without outlook, almost without worldly hope, had become independent of the world;--what was death itself, from the world, to what I had come

through? I understood well what the old Christian people meant by their "Conversion", by God's Infinite Mercy to them:-- I had, in effect, gained an immense victory; and, for a number of years, had, in spite of nerves and chagrins, a constant inward happiness that was quite royal and supreme; in which all temporal evil was transient and insignificant; and which essentially remains with me still, though far oftener eclipsed, and lying deeper down, than then. Once more, thank Heaven for its highest gift".¹

1. Reminiscences, ii, pp. 178-80.

CHAPTER FOUR

SELF - DENIAL

"Deny thyself; whatsoever is thyself,
consider it as nothing".
(Carlyle in his Journal) ¹

As a university student reading Locke's Essay, Carlyle must have had no inkling of the dilemma of fifteen years duration to which it was the introduction. His whole religious struggle may be described as the instinctive effort of a man originally bred upon the moral law of God to throw off the shackles of the empirical philosophy and its complement in ethics, utilitarianism. We have seen how Sartor's spiritual drama turns upon renunciation of the search for happiness. To the end of his life, the mere mention of the word "happiness" was sure to arouse his vehement protest.

Locke, in denying the existence of all "innate ideas" had denied that of duty as well, reducing ethics to the limits of sensationalism. Discoverable in man are no "innate practical principles"; there is "only" a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery.² "Good or evil are nothing but pleasure and pain, or that which occasions pleasures or pains to us". Locke's concern was to dispute the pretensions of religious sanctity attached to questionable principles of morality, and to "purify" ethics of authoritarian formulations and popular

1. Two Notebooks, p.265

2. Locke, Essay, bk.i, ch.iii, sec 3.

misconceptions by the direct appeal to experience-- an object at once attractive and repellant to the young Calvinist. Locke had no intention of subverting either religious belief or moral conduct. Indeed he felt he was only establishing the true law of God on sound foundations. God's will, he wrote, "is the only true touchstone for moral rectitude; and by comparing them to his law it is that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions; that is, whether as duties or sins they are likely to procure them¹ happiness or misery, from the hands of Almighty God".

The ethics of pleasure and pain thus began with the supernatural background of heaven and hell, but were so anthropocentric in emphasis that they soon sloughed off the other-worldly adjunct, and became a matter of purely human calculation on the basis of self-interest. Teufelsdröckh found he could not have so much as a devil to believe in, since, by his time, hell's punishment had been rendered both unnecessary to man and uncomplimentary to God.

Locke's empirical ethics were developed by Hume, and formulated into the basis of action by Bentham and the Mills, father and son, but were first expressed in Hartley's Observations on Man (1749) and Adam Smith's Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759), two books which show the poverty of 18th century ethical thought. Philosophically a materialist, Hartley, a physician, had erected, from a physiological

1. Ibid., bk.ii, ch.xxviii, sec 8.

analysis of sensory "vibrations", a whole ingenious system of pleasures, with the lowest pleasures of sense duly subordinated to the highest pleasure of loving God. Smith's moral optimism was based on a naive deism, with its belief in a "great, benevolent, and all-wise Being" who is bound to assure "the greatest possible quantity of happiness" in the universe at all times. The proof of this is that the actual condition of nearly all men is health, freedom from debt, and a clear conscience!¹

Hume, though he undermined the empirical philosophy by his scepticism, gave further expression to the ethics based upon it,² but it was Bentham and his followers who succeeded in making it the practical ethics dominant in Carlyle's youth.

1. Knowledge of both Hartley and Smith were probably come by only through Dugald Stewart's history of philosophy (Dissertation on the Progress of Metaphysical, Ethical and Political Philosophy), and neither philosopher was taken seriously by Carlyle. He did read Smith's Wealth of Nations in 1817, and approved of the book, but only because Smith was one of "the very few writers who have not gone delirious when they come to treat of Meta-physics" (Early Letters, i, p.101). Hartley was linked with the name of Erasmus, Darwin and Priestley in Carlyle's condemnation of materialist ethics (see State of German Literature", and "Signs of the Times", Essays, i, p.79n, and ii, p.65, respectively). No one could take Smith seriously and Hartley's school later provided a target for Carlyle's scorn (Sartor, p.2).
2. As in his concept of justice: "Reflection on the general loss caused by the instability of every one's possessions leads to a 'tacit convention, entered into by all the members of a society, to abstain from each other's possessions'; and thereupon 'immediately arise the ideas of justice and injustice; as also those of property, right and obligation'. It is only from the selfishness and confined generosity of man, along with the scanty provision nature has made for his wants, that justice derives its origin". (T.H.Green, in introduction to the Moral Part of Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, Works i, pp 363,4.

"A man's moral sensibility," he wrote, "may be said to be strong when the pains and pleasures of the moral sanctions show greater in his eyes in comparison with other pleasures and pains (and consequently exert a stronger influence) than¹ in the eyes of the persons he is compared with. The moral man is he who calculates his pleasures and pains carefully, and the object of legislation is to make laws based upon the citizen's desire for reward and fear of punishment. In regard to a morality of sacrifice, he was completely cynical, insisting that its adherents merely wanted others to sacrifice for them. Pain is the only evil, and man will be "virtuous" by determining in his own self-interest, to avoid it. This is the doctrine which Carlyle described in the "Characteristics".

"Goodness, which was a rule to itself, must now appeal to Precept, and seek strength from Sanctions; the Freewill no longer reigns unquestioned and by right, but like a mere earthly sovereign, by expediency, by Rewards and Punishments;... that mysterious Self-impulse of the whole man, heaven-inspired, and in all senses partaking of the Infinite,...is conceived as non-existent, and only the outward Mechanism of it remains acknowledged: of Volition, except as the synonym of Desire, we² hear nothing; of 'Motives', without any Mover, more than enough".

1. An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, London, 1789, p.xlvii.
2. Essays, iii, p.9

When J. S. Mill, in Carlyle's lifetime, softened the Benthamite doctrine to include reason and virtue, even the virtue of self-sacrifice,¹ as objects of man's natural desire for pleasure, concluding that men can be trusted through the freedom of franchise and laissez faire economy to seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number, Carlyle directed² the whole of his wrath against this unrealistic optimism. It is important to fully appreciate the thread of consistency that runs from his first Calvinistic horror at the Benthamite appeal to self-interest, to his later condemnation of the utilitarian philosophy that was the foundation for liberal political economy, the "Dismal Science", as he called it. Carlyle really opposed the extension of the franchise and laissez faire economics because he opposed utilitarianism. We are in a position to understand this today, and to soften our judgments against the "anti-democrat".

1. His untenable position is revealed thus: "With John Stuart Mill,² the effort to conjoin hedonism and heroism is already such a patent fraud, that the philosopher himself remains undeceived. Here we have the pathetic spectacle of a man who believes, by intellectual conviction, that pleasure is the greatest good, but who, nonetheless, would like to be heroic if he could. He admits that, in the 'very imperfect state of the world's arrangements', the willingness to sacrifice one's own happiness for the happiness of others must be the 'highest virtue'. Yet, even in this noble gesture, Mill cannot fend the sneer of Carlyle that this is 'heroism with its eyes out'. For Mill realizes, as Epicurus did not, that, when a hedonist talks of dying for his friend, he is being not truly hedonistic, but simply maudlin". (R.E.Fitch, "Heroism, Hedonism, and Happiness", Hibbert Journal, Oct. 1939, p. 43.
2. The friendship of Carlyle and Mill was based on no real thought, other than a common radicalism. During the period of Mill's discipleship to Carlyle, he tried very hard to believe that the desire for "the good of the species" as the "ultimate end" was the same thing as Carlyle's "infinite nature of duty", not appreciating the religious dimension of Carlyle's morality. (See Letters of J.S. Mill, ed. by H.S.R. Elliot, London, 1910, i, pp. 90, 1).

Were it not for Sartor, it would be difficult for us to see how Carlyle could ever have been troubled by the utilitarians' virtual sanction of selfishness. But we have already seen his youthful "Byronism", his intense self-assertiveness against the limitations of his destiny, in the romantic mood of Faust and the Sorrows of Werter. Romanticism had its philosophical justification in utilitarianism; it was indeed the ethic of pleasure in revolt against the artificial restraint of reason which the utilitarian philosophers always blithely assumed would transmute self-interest into the general interest. Byron's Manfred was the English version of Goethe's Werter, and before¹ his "conversion", Carlyle was as much a romantic as either.

1. At that time for him, Napoleon was Byron in action, and was admired for the "stern force" of his "unconquerable spirit" (Love Letters, i, p.68). The news of Byron's death in 1824, he wrote to Jane Welsh, "came down on my heart like a mass of lead". He called him "the noblest spirit in Europe", (ibid, p.366) but this was an extravagant eulogy to a hero already suspected. "Byron may still easily fail to be a great man", he had noted earlier (ibid, p.195), and two years later, after studying Wilhelm Meister, he was scornfully describing him in his journal as "a dandy of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Froude, ii, p.93).

Such a modern commentator as Bertrand Russell, associating Carlyle exclusively with hero-worship, and romantic power-worship, by asserting that Byron always remained "in his blood" (History of Western Philosophy, London, 1946, p.779), underestimates the extent of Carlyle's reaction, finally summed up in these words: "A strong man, of recent time, fights little for any good cause anywhere; works weakly as an English lord; weakly delivers himself from such working; with weak despondency endures the cackling of plucked geese at St. James's; and sitting in sunny Italy in his coach-and-four, at a distance of two thousand miles from them, writes over many reams of paper the following sentence with variations: Saw ever the world a greater or unhappier? This was a sham strong man". (Froude, (ed. London, 1891) vol. i., p.221).

The new atmosphere which he breathed in reading the German writers was welcome. "They do derive the duties and chief end of man from other grounds than the philosophy of Profit and Loss", he wrote enthusiastically in the Life of Schiller¹. This was the happy phrase which thenceforth Carlyle used when speaking of utilitarian pleasure-pain calculations. It is significant that Carlyle was never so far from his inbred Calvinism that he could feel easy about this ethic. "The philosophy of Epicurus was not made for him", he wrote of the hero in Wotton Reinfred; "his understanding was convinced, but his heart in secret denied it. Vice and all baseness, which at first it might have seemed to sanction, he still rejected, nay, abhorred. But what, then, was virtue? Another name for happiness, for pleasure? No longer the eternal life and beauty of the universe, the invisibbe all-pervading effluence of God; but a poor earthly theorem, a balance of profit and loss resting on self-interest, and pretending to rest on nothing higher"². When once his heart asserted itself over his understanding, the whole force of his satire was directed against it. "Fantastic tricks enough man has played, in his time; has fancied himself to be most things, down even to an animated heap of Glass: but to fancy himself a dead Iron-Balance for weighing Pains and Pleasures on, was reserved for this his latter era. There stands he, his Universe one huge Manger, filled with hay and thistles to be weighed against each other; and looks long-eared enough"³.

1. P.114.

2. P.24.

3. Sartor.p.176.

Carlyle was eventually to bring his power as a historian against the "pursuit-of-happiness" ethic in his interpretation of the preparation among the French philosophers of the Revolution. They were criticized for having no belief more than that man was made to be happy, that "pleasure is pleasant", the gospel of Rousseau. "In such prophesied Lubberland, of Happiness, Benevolence, and Vice cured of its deformity, trust not, my friends! Man is not what one calls a happy animal: his appetite for sweet victual is so enormous. How, in this wild Universe, which storms in on him, infinite, vague-menacing, shall poor man find, say not happiness, but existence, and footing to stand on, if it be not by girding himself together for continual endeavor and endurance? Wo, if in his heart there dwelt no devout Faith; if the word Duty had lost its meaning for him!".¹ Critics who have been applying the title "misanthrope" to Carlyle for over a century² misunderstand the nature of Carlyle's revolt against the "pursuit-of-happiness" ethic, and so cannot see how justified it was. They belong to the school of optimistic prophets who are always accusing the world's Jeremiahs of being too gloomy. A character in Wotton is made to say, "Show me a man that is happy, and I will show thee a man that has--an excellent nervous system", and the novel's hero proclaims, "Happiness is not man's object... He does not find it, he ought

1. French Revolution, vol.1.p.54.

2. As, for instance, B. Russell, who observes satirically that a man may desire an increase of general happiness or a mitigation of general suffering, but that Carlyle desires the exact opposite! (Op.cit., p.807).

not to seek it, neither is it his highest wish".¹

It is almost inconceivable for us to imagine the anachronism of Carlyle's preaching against happiness at the very time of Britain's greatest prosperity and most unsuspecting optimism. In Past and Present, he cried against the "Greatest-Happiness Principle" which had replaced the "Greatest-Nobleness Principle" in the conduct of public and private affairs. "We plead not for God's justice; we are not ashamed to stand clamouring and pleading for our own 'interests',....There is such an intense desire in us for them!".²

The uneasy conscience of Carlyle had for long been in search of something better than the ethics of the utilitarians. When it appeared, it was like a revelation. He described it, lecturing on literature in 1838, in a quiet, thankful way. Before proceeding to the study of the revelation's meaning, it is proper that we read his own words. "It was to me like the rising of a light in the darkness which lay around and threatened to swallow me up. I was then in the very midst of Werterism--the blackness and darkness of death. There was one thing in particular which struck me in Goethe. It is in his Wilhelm Meister. The hero is told 'that 'a number of applications for advice were daily made to the Association, which were answered thus and thus. But that many people wrote in particular for recipes for happiness. All that', he adds, 'was laid on the shelf, and not answered at all'. Now this thing gave me great surprise when I read it. What! I said, is it not the recipe of happiness that I have been seeking all my

1. PP.64,69.

2. P.154

life? And is ~~not~~ it precisely because I have failed in finding it that I am ~~not~~ miserable and discontented?.... At Length after turning it up a great while in my own mind, I got to see that it was very true, what he said; that it was the thing all the world was in error in. No man has the right to ask for a recipe of happiness; he can do without happiness. There is something better than that. All kinds of men who have done great things, priests, prophets, sages, have had in them something higher than the love of happiness to guide them to spiritual clearness and perfection,-- a far better thing than happiness. Love of happiness is but a kind of hunger at the best; a craving because I have not enough of sweet provision in the world. If I am asked what that higher thing is, I cannot at once make answer; I am afraid of causing mistake. There is no name I can give it that is not to be questioned. I could not speak about it; there is no name for it, but pity for that heart that does not feel it. There is no good volition in that heart. This higher thing was once named 'the Cross of Christ',--not a happy thing that surely,--'The Worship of Sorrow'₁, named, by the old heroic martyrs, named in all the heroic sufferings, all the heroic acts of men"₁.

It was a revelation, which like most revelations, came to him as a truth he had always known, and in this case, brought him full circle, back to the boy listening to the Bible reading in his father's house, attending Summer sacraments in Ecclefechan, and to the young divinity student preaching on the

text, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray...". It was the age-old repetition of the phenomenon of nurture: what the boy hears with his ears, after long struggle, the man understands with his heart.

The touchstone for this understanding, Carlyle found in Wilhelm Meister's Wanderjahre, chiefly Chapters X and XI, on the "Pedagogic Province". Meditating them as he translated, he was forcibly struck by Goethe's answer to his long questioning. Reading them today, this is difficult for us to understand, because Goethe had cloaked his real meaning in fantastic symbolism, in the manner of the artist challenging attention by mystification. Carlyle gave his attention because it was Goethe who asked it, the Goethe who had become his friend by articulating his spiritual agonies in Faust,--not because of the intrinsic merits of Wilhelm Meister, which are indeed dubious. A man or writer is permitted to be the instrumentality by which a disciple is converted, and then, apparently, the disciple's receptivity allows an indefinite latitude in the means of conversion! This extraordinary means we shall now examine.

Wilhelm, taking his son to matriculate at the Pedagogic Province, is received by its administrators for a visit of inspection. He sees the children in various surprising postures of reverence, and is told that the school thereby inculcates "a threefold Reverence,....the First is Reverence for what is above us....a testimony that there is a God above,

who images and reveals himself in parents, teachers, superiors. Then comes the second; Reverence for what is under us...we are to regard the earth with attention and cheerfulness: from the bounty of the Earth we are nourished; the Earth affords unutterable joys; but disproportionate sorrows she also brings us". These two reverences issue in a third aspect of human fellowship, teaching the scholars not to be "selfishly isolated; only in combination with his equals does he front the world". Reverence is not natural; it must, in this way, be taught, and when learned, it dispels fear. It is the worth, the business of all true religions.

Wilhelm is then given a lesson in comparative religion, Goethe teaching, through his pedagogue, his religious universalism, his tolerant embrace of all religions under the category of reverence. Here is the fountain of all of Carlyle's liberalism in regard to non-Christian religions. The pedagogue describes three types of religion. "The Religion which depends on reverence for what is above us, we denominate the Ethnical; it is the religion of the nations, and the first happy deliverance from a degrading fear; all Heathen religions, as we call them, are of this sort, whatsoever name they may bear. The Second Religion, which founds itself on reverence for what is around us, we denominate the Philosophical; for the philosopher stations himself in the middle, and must draw down to him all that is higher, and up to him all that is lower, and only in this medium condition does he merit the title of Wise....But now we have to

speak of the Third Religion, grounded on reverence for what is beneath us; this we name the Christian, as in the Christian religion such a temper is with most distinctness manifested: it is a last step to which mankind were fitted and destined to attain. But what a task was it, not only to be patient with the Earth, and let it lie beneath us, we appealing to a higher birth-place; but also to recognise humility and poverty, mockery and despite, disgrace and wretchedness, suffering and death, to recognize these things as divine; nay, even on sin and crime to look not as hindrances, but to honour and love them as furtherances, of what is holy. Of this, indeed, we find some traces in all ages: but the trace is not the goal; and this being now attained, the human species cannot retrograde; and we may say, that the Christian religion having once appeared cannot again vanish; having once assumed its divine shape, can be subject to no dissolution".

These are not to be confused with the words of orthodox theology defending the claim of the Christian revelation to be final--"once for all", but the expression of one who believes in the progressive outflowering of the human spirit, culminating in the universal acceptance of all that is, including suffering, death, and all life's painful contradictions. It is the logical conclusion of pantheism, which must, by definition, bring all evil into the sphere of the good. It was with this in mind that Goethe subtitled the novel Die Entsagenden (The Resigning Ones). Carlyle subtitles his

translation The Renunciants, and so shows that he is prepared to put a more Christian content into Goethe's Entsagen.

Goethe's humanism is revealed in the answer given to Wilhelm's question, as to which of these three religions the pedagogues adhered. "To all the three", they replied....for in their union they produce what may properly be called the true religion. Out of those Three Reverences springs the highest reverence, reverence for oneself, and those again unfold themselves from this; so that man attains the highest elevation of which he is capable, that of being justified in reckoning himself the Best that God and Nature have produced; nay, of being able to continue on this lofty eminence, without being again by self-conceit and presumption drawn down from it into the vulgar level". Wilhelm's childhood orthodoxy must then have been startled by his instructor's declaration that the Apostle's Creed was the confession for this eclectic religious humanism. "The first Article is Ethnic, and belongs to all nations; the second, Christian, for those struggling with affliction and glorified in affliction; the third, in fine, teaches an inspired Communion of Saints, that is, of men in the highest degree good and wise. And should not therefore the Three Divine Persons, under the similitudes and names of which these threefold doctrines and commands are promulgated, justly be considered as in the highest sense One!" Wilhelm is grateful for the explanation; Carlyle himself was never so concerned to streamline traditional theology, though he did carry

with him Goethe's idea of the communion of saints, i.e., the essential unity of all hero-see-ers of Reality, behind the facade of appearance.

Wilhelm is now ushered into an educational gallery, where he is shown paintings depicting the Old Testament, and beside them, others representing Greek mythology. These are symbolic of the Ethnic religion, the spirit of which is to be sought for in the history of the world. Among "all Heathen religions" the Israelitish religion is stressed, not because it is the best, but because it has continued! The Jews and their religion are significant because of their persistence, and their sacred Books because they present a satisfying whole: "Fragmentary enough to excite; barbarous enough to rouse; tender enough to appease." In these two recommendations, Carlyle found the seeds for his later frequent assertions of the worth of anything that endures in history, and for the reservations which were to condition his profound admiration of the Bible. We might also see in Goethe's unique interpretation of the first Mosaic commandment, a suggestion of the humanism in Carlyle's hero-worship. The Hebrew religion "has not embodied its god in any form; and so has left us at liberty to represent him in a worthy human shape, and likewise, by way of contrast, to designate Idolatry by forms of beasts and monsters". Goethe, in his paganism, and the teacher of hero-worship, following Goethe, were both insufficiently aware of the Pauline judgment upon the Greeks for the idolatry of classical humanism which "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into image made like to corruptible man".¹

But now Wilhelm, at the end of the gallery, faces a closed door, and, surprised, observes that the exhibition has terminated before the depiction of "the divine Man", Christ. He is told that Christ's was a private life, and his teachings are for individuals, for the wise, the devotees of the Second, or Philosophical Religion. Accordingly he is ushered into a second gallery containing pictures representative of the New Testament miracles and parables, by which "a new world is opened up". Miracles ("they have a natural meaning, though a deep one") "make the common extraordinary", parables "the extraordinary common". Here Carlyle was offered a new and immensely attractive view of the miraculous. For the loss, by scepticism, of an orthodox belief in miraculous events, he found compensation in Goethe's fusion of the natural and the supernatural, the common and the extraordinary, into a miraculous whole. We shall explicate this in analyzing Carlyle's Weltanschauung in a later chapter; it is enough here to note his debt to Goethe for the paradox of the rejection of particular miraculous events and the acceptance of all events as "miraculous".

To his amazement, Wilhelm discovers that the New Testament representations go only as far as The Last Supper, and he is informed that, for pedagogic emphasis, the death of Christ is set apart from his life. "In life, he appears as a true philosopher...as a wise man in the highest sense". In accordance with the meaning of the Second or Philosophical Religion, stationed in the middle, he draws up to him all that is lower (i.e., "the ignorant, the poor, and the sick") and down to him all

that is higher (i.e., his divine origin, his equality with God). Thus he "shows to all men who are aiming at a certain elevation in doctrine and life, what they have to look for in the world" (i.e., the martyrdom of the philosophical humanist!). Goethe's promulgation of Christ, as the representative symbol of all philosophic men elevated to the divine, has often been mistaken for genuine Christianity. Indeed, Carlyle, in his unbounded enthusiasm,¹ so mistook it. "No other man", he told Sterling,...² "has yet ascertained what Christianity is to us". The fact is that "the Cross of Christ" was, for neither Goethe nor Carlyle, the Atonement, but rather the archetype of all human martyrdom, and his claim to equality with God the archetype of idealism's deification of the human spirit.

So Wilhelm, at the end of his instruction, is told that, as a neophyte, he cannot for a year (during which, presumably, he is to learn, by Entsagen, reverence for what is lower) be permitted to penetrate into the last pedagogic hall, "the Sanctuary of Sorrow". For the time, he can come only to its threshold. "Thus was I standing in the porch of that 'Sanctuary of Sorrow', Teufelsdröckh declares, "by strange, steep ways, had I too been guided thither; and ere long its sacred gates would open, and the 'Divine Depth of Sorrow' lie disclosed to me".³ When Wilhelm asks if the pedagogues use Christ's

1. At the end of his career, he told the students of the University of Edinburgh that "if ambition had been my only rule", these ten pages of Wilhelm Meister he had rather have written.. than."all the books that have appeared since I came into the world". ("Inaugural Address", Essays, iv, p.473).
2. Froude, i, 11, p. 105.
3. Sartor, p. 151.

"sufferings, his death, as a model of exalted patience, they reply in the affirmative, but with the surprising observation that "we draw a veil over those sufferings, even because we reverence them so highly. We hold it a damnable audacity to bring forth that torturing Cross, and the Holy One who suffers on it, or to expose them to the light of the sun, which hid its face when a reckless world forced such a sight on it; to take these mysterious secrets, in which the divine depth of Sorrow lies hid, and play with them, fondle them, trick them out, and rest not till the most reverend of all solemnities appears vulgar and paltry". Goethe's aversion to the crucifix is revealed here, the revulsion of the sensitive aesthete toward the often crude handling of the holiest symbols in Roman Catholic practice. Carlyle did not share this antipathy; his opposition to "popery" was on more traditional Protestant ground.

Before we try to understand the state of Carlyle's mind upon graduation from the Pedagogic Province, we must stop to consider carefully the real nature of its teaching. This is important because we shall find significant differences between teacher and graduate. We have already noted the translation's important change of word in the novel's subtitle. To be resigned to the world, is a far different attitude than to renounce the world. Goethe's attitude is one of willing, but passive accommodation to life's realities which, of necessity, are a large part sorrow and suffering. This was the requirement for a well-rounded cultivation of the self, "the Best that God and Nature have produced". This is, indeed, "a lofty eminence" from which the

benign pagan surveys life's joy and sorrow! What Goethe called "reverence", meaning quiet acceptance (he did not miss a day at his desk when his son died), Carlyle was to call "the ¹worship of sorrow". This is the difference between a Stoic ἀπαθεία and the belief in providence which leads the Christian to look for the "uses of suffering". We are reminded of Carlyle's letter to his mother about his illness. ² The positive meaning added by Carlyle in the phrase "worship of sorrow" is that which has always been apprehended by Christians with a pervading sense of predestination, and an attitude toward life as a testing period when God disciplines his elect. ³ "Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth with its injuries under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno trained thee; thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee" (the Goethean stoicism and "reverence" are here), "and even ⁴because it injures thee" (this is the new Christian content added by Carlyle); "for this a Greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent. Knowest thou that 'Worship of Sorrow?' The Temple thereof, founded some eighteen centuries ago, now lies in ruins, overgrown with jungle, the habitation of doleful creatures: nevertheless, venture forward; in a low crypt, arched out of falling fragments, thou findest the

1. Critics are right to point out that there is no such phrase in Wilhelm Meister (e.g., N. Young, Carlyle, His Rise and Fall, London, 1927, p.70.)
2. See supra, p. 65.
3. Heb. xii.6ff; Rom. viii.28.
4. Italics mine.

Altar still there, and its sacred Lamp perennially burning"¹

It would be difficult to find anywhere in Christian literature, a more grateful acknowledgment of Christ, the Man of Sorrows, the archetype of all deep spirits who must suffer to be great. Almost without exception, Carlyle spoke always of Christ with the deepest reverence, or even chose rather to be silent, in such a way as to shame the average orthodox Christian. This we must appreciate, while we lament the nearness with which the moralist came to the apprehension of Christ's suffering in its cosmic significance, the light it shed upon the judgment and mercy of God. In the last analysis, though Carlyle was only a semi-Christian, he was closer to the heart of Christianity than a traditionalist with an atonement doctrine but with no profound sense of the meaning of suffering.

The hesitation of Goethe, in halting Wilhelm before the entrance of the Sanctuary of Sorrow, in refusing to exhibit the Cross, is significant of much in contrast to Carlyle's positive avowal of the "Divine Depth of Sorrow".² His idea of

1. Sartor, p.154.

2. Thus one Goethean asserts that "the belief that the Christian way of thinking is essentially unhealthy.. widely pervades his works. He hates asceticism, or what he calls 'abstinence', in every form; he has no patience with what Carlyle calls 'the worship of sorrow', and refuses even to let his mind dwell on images of pain or grief. The very thought, for instance, of pictures of the crucifixion, or of martyrdoms, infuriates him; he pronounces them to be odious and profane. By heathenism on the other hand he means what Heine calls 'Lebensherrlichkeit', a splendid and glorious or harmonious view of life, in which pain and evil are in a manner suppressed. (J.R. Seeley, Goethe Reviewed after Sixty Years, London, 1894, pp149-50).

reverence for what is below us Carlyle transmuted into reverence for what is above us: God's moral law, especially as shown in the hero-see-er, whom we must revere, and so obey. "Only in reverently bowing down before the Higher does (man) feel himself exalted".¹ Goethe taught him reverence² but he transmuted it into reverence for the hero, the revealer of divine truth. Goethe suggested suffering and sorrow to him, as the alternative to the pursuit of happiness, and he transmuted this into what he had heard in his father's home. As a historian, his interpretation of the French Revolution, as the final tragical expression of man's "declaration of rights" to happiness, was possible because of this fundamental spiritual insight. Sounding the dirge over Paris' "Feast of Pikes" and France's glorification of man, he cries, "Could no Atheist-Naigeon contrive to discern, eighteen centuries off, those Thirteen most poor mean-dressed men, at frugal Supper, in a mean Jewish dwelling, with no symbol but hearts god-initiated into the "Divine Depth of Sorrow", and a Do this in remembrance of me:--and so cease that small difficult crowing of his, if he were not doomed to it?"³.

This was an intensely personal discovery, which he confided in 1847 to his friend, Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, "All the

1. Sartor, p. 200.

2. The caretaker of Carlyle's birthplace in Ecclefechan told me of the South African who requested to spend the night in the birthroom. After sleeping on the floor, he rose the next morning to write in the visitor's book, before leaving, "He taught me reverence".

3. French Revolution, ii, pp 48, 9.

good I ever got came to me.,.in the shape of sorrow:...there is nothing noble or godlike in this world but has in it something of 'infinite sadness', very different indeed from what the current moral philosophies represent it to us".¹ Carlyle was speaking of Dante in the lectures, but it was also a personal confession when he said, "Thought, true labour of any kind, highest virtue itself, is it not the daughter of Pain? Born as out of the black whirlwind;--true effort, in fact, as of a captive struggling to free himself: that is Thought. In all ways, we are 'to become perfect through suffering'.²" The reference shows the primary source of Carlyle's conception, in the New Testament. Not only the hero as poet, but also the hero as prophet is molded by suffering. "Difficulty, abnegation, martyrdom, death are the allurements that act on the heart of man", he said, when considering the power of Mahomet as a religion-founder.⁴ Suffering as a good to the great man is a recurring theme in all of Carlyle's biographical writing, and is not subordinate even to the emphasis on sincerity. Above all, it was ever present in the careers of literary men. Carlyle saw a kindred soul in Dr. Johnson, distinguished among men of letters for his successful battle with economic handicaps, physical and mental pain.⁵ Carlyle believed

1. Froude, iv, p.17

2. Heroes, p 92.

3. Heb. 11.10.

4. Heroes, p.70.

5. Ibid., pp.178,9. "The Contradiction which yawns wide enough in every life, which it is the meaning and task of life to reconcile, was in Johnson's wider than in most". (Boswell's Life of Johnson, "Essays", iii, p.91).

it was the hemming in of a genius by outward circumstances which sharpened the intensity of his spirit; public acclaim brought moral tragedy to a Burns, and luxury encouraged undisciplined roving and raving in a Byron. Carlyle's whole life and thought must be seen as a typical expression of what Troeltsch calls the "intra-mundane asceticism" of the Calvinist spirit;¹ not the monastic ideal of retirement from the world for the interior cultivation of the soul, but the spirit of welcoming external restraints and imposing upon the self what further limitations are necessary for an intense concentration upon one's God-appointed task in the world. This is the basis of Carlyle's attack upon the "sentimental philanthropy" of the 19th century, which is mystifying in a moralist if not seen as the consequence of the logic of asceticism mistakenly carried to the point of satirizing even much-needed prison-reform² because of what he thought was a misguided attempt to eliminate suffering.³ The "Universal Abolition-of-Pain Association" was the scornful name he gave to the Evangelicals of Exeter Hall. Pain is necessary, he countered, because it keeps men from becoming scoundrels. The men who are great are those who are "much-enduring", a favorite phrase which Carlyle learned from its application to Ulysses in the Odyssey, and extended to all men who, like the Greek hero, were earnestly struggling "homeward".⁴

1. Cf. Troeltsch, E., The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches, trans. by O. Wyon, London, 1931, vol. ii, pp. 605 ff.

2. Latter-Day Pamphlets, No. ii.

3. "The Nigger Question", Essays, iv, p. 349

4. See Lectures on Literature, p. 22 and note

The law of the universe is that its inhabitants must proceed "not by smooth flowery paths...but over steep untrodden places, through storm-clad chasms, waste oceans, and the bosom of tornadoes".¹

These references should be enough to show us the fundamentally different quality of the Goethean and Carlylean ideals. Goethe's object was self-culture, the attainment of the balanced life. "I yield up my life in order to be", he wrote to a friend.² Goethe's Enßsagen was the pruning of the self for the sake of producing a finer fruit. It is indeed surprising that his self-conscious concern³ to develop his nature was not perceived by Carlyle whose very definition of genius was that it be greatness unconscious of itself.⁴ Harrold is right in observing that Carlyle "interpreted Goethe after his own Puritan fashion"⁵ that he underestimated the pagan side of his hero, "the Goethean repose and delicacy, the delicate shaping of his life as a work of art".⁶ The New England Puritanism in Emerson was offended at

1. Past and Present, p.34.

2. Bielschowsky, op.cit., ii, p.163.

3. "I should like", he wrote from Italy, "to occupy myself solely with relations that are enduring, and then, according to Spinoza, to win eternity for my spirit. This living according to the known dictates of divine reason, this sole devotion to the things of the world that have enduring value, involved more than a renunciation of the temporary pleasures afforded by yielding to fleeting transitory desires, to our passions; for a being which can find its preservation only in the accomplishment of the highest tasks, it very often means also a renunciation of influences of applause, in the present". (ibid. ii, p.163)

4. "Characteristics", Essays, iii, p.5

5. C.F.Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought: 1819-1834, New Haven, 1934, p.72.

6. Ibid., p.70

Goethe's "velvet life" and "pampered genius" (to say nothing of "bad morals"), and Carlyle was so informed in a letter. But Carlyle's answer, though he admitted Goethe's "Heathen (Ethnic)" side, was that Emerson should study the master more. That Carlyle was uncritical of Goethe simply because he had been the medium of a "word of life" in his darkest period was practically admitted to Emerson. "I will tell you in a word why I like Goethe: his is the only healthy mind, of any extent, that I have discovered in Europe in long generations; it was he that first convincingly proclaimed to me...(that) it is still possible that Man be a Man... How can I be too grateful?"¹ This vagueness was no answer, and Emerson may have noted later the significant fact that Carlyle's active interest in Goethe subsided after his death in 1832, so that even in 1838, his omission in the literary pantheon of Homer, Aeschylus, Dante, and Shakespeare is noteworthy.²

It is probable that a dim awareness of the dominance of the pagan side of Goethe, of the artificiality of his "neo-Christianity", was the reason for Carlyle's gradual, though never explicit, drift away from his first Master.³ Goethe's aestheticism always puzzled him, and it was that,

1. Correspondence, i, pp.30,40.

2. "One really cannot add another great name to these", he said in the Lectures on Literature (p.78). It was a rather lame excuse, that of general lack of knowledge about Goethe, and nearness to his lifetime, with which he announced the exclusion of Goethe as a principal in his cast of heroes two years later (Heroes, p.158).

3. See Froude, ii, pp.93,4.

really, which was at the basis of his Entsagen. "Entsagen meant for him something closely analogous to the artist's 'selecting', ordering, and shaping of his materials".¹

"Resignation", writes one of Goethe's biographers, "means... limitation, concentration. It is man's duty to limit his striving and to concentrate all his powers on the limited field. Resignation means the conquering of passions, means the giving up of many inherited and earned advantages, rights, and possessions. It transforms the man of impulse into a man of reason, the selfish man into a public-spirited man, the egoist into an altruist. It exerts such profound influence on man's nature and development that Goethe considered it, next to work, the most important principle of life".²

Harrold stresses the difference of Entsagen from Carlyle's ascetic ideal, its relative denial: "all parts are permitted at the proper time". Lothario, the ideal man in Wilhelm Meister, is one who has "somehow combined his high ethical will to public service, with unconventional relationships with Aurelia and Lydia....The idea of absolute denial of anything was repulsive to Goethe".³

Carlyle replaced "resignation" with "renunciation", Entsagen with Novalis' Selbsttödtung (self-annihilation),

1. Harrold, op.cit., p.216

2. Bielschowsky, op.cit.iii, p.195. The same writer cites the story of Tasso as an example of the truth expressed in Wilhelm Meister: "Man is never happy till his unlimited striving prescribes its own limitations". (Ibid.,ii,p.72).

3. Op.cit.,p.217.

as the "first preliminary moral act" of life. We saw in the last chapter what it meant, the renouncing of one's infinite claims of happiness and the attainment of "blessedness" by loyalty to duty. To Carlyle, the two German words meant the same thing, and he furthermore conceived of them as synonymous with Christian humility. "It is long years since I first saw the meaning of Humility (Entsagen), and it came on me like water on one dying of thirst, and I felt it and still feel it to be the beginning of moral life. Unhappy that I am! Could I keep that always in my eye, I too had 'overcome the world'."¹ This indefiniteness in the use of terms should warn us that Carlyle used the typical mystic conception of "self-killing" with reservations that he did not define even to himself. When one considers the absence of anything like a "mystic way" of contemplation, of spiritual discipline, when his belief in God is seen to center around the stern Lawgiver, demanding the unswerving devotion of men to their duty in the world, it is difficult to see in him the typical surrender of the individual to the "mystic's "All". Carlyle wrote of Werner's "merging of the Me in the Idea", it is true, but he called this "the principle which reigns both in Stoical and Christian ethics", and so, obviously, had moral obligation in mind. He would have avoided confusion in the minds of critics who over-emphasize his "mysticism", and better expressed his meaning, had he written, "entire subordination of the Me to the Moral Law of

1. Wilson, ii, p.336.

the universe". This is proved by the fact that in elucidating Werner, he points simply to the German's abjuration of happiness, the acceptance "of authority superior to all sensitive impulses "as the grand law of his being". While he sees fit to quote his translation of a very mystical passage in Werner's Söhne der Thals as a model of renunciation,¹ he is suspicious of the author's tendency toward "Brahminism", his plunging "deep in Theosophy". If Carlyle could be so free in his use of the word "mystic" as to apply it even to the young Mill,² he must have opened the conception as wide as the common usage of "Spiritual" today, that is, indicative of any phenomena or attitudes not purely materialistic.

We should at least be convinced of the disparity between Goethe and Carlyle by the latter's use of the strong term Selbsttödtung, which he derived from one of the Fragments of Novalis, quoted in his essay. "The true philosophical Act is annihilation of self (Selbsttödtung); this is the real beginning of all Philosophy; all requisites for being a Disciple of Philosophy point hither. This Act alone corresponds to all the conditions and characteristics of transcendental conduct"³ This is probably not the philosopher's rational purification of the mind of any personal point of view, as Harrold interprets it, since to Novalis, the "Philosopher" and the poet were

1. "Life and Writings of Werner", Essays, i, p.117.

2. Froude, ii, p.190.

3. "Novalis", Essays, ii, p.39.

properly one.¹ Novalis is even less precise in his terms than Carlyle. Here again the mere word, self-killing, was enough to turn Carlyle's mind back to the Christian ethical ideal of self-denial. He quite deliberately alters the quotation to suit his meaning in the Latter-Day Pamphlets: "Selbsttödtung..² (is) justly reckoned the beginning of all virtue". His writings are full of sermonizing on the New Testament paradox of losing the self to find it. An evangelist outside the pulpit he could not bring himself to stand in, he pleads, "My brother, the brave man has to give his Life away..Give it, like a royal heart; let the price be Nothing: thou hast then, in a certain sense, got All for it!"³ Self-denial was the soul of Christianity (the soul of Islam, too, he said, in interpreting Mahomet),⁴ and "Nature owns no man who is not a Martyr".⁵ Job's surrender to the greatness of God was Carlyle's favorite Biblical illustration. "We have to recognize whatsoever befalls us as sent from God above, and say, It is good and wise, God is great! 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him'."⁶

1. Ibid., p.41.

2. P.303. Italics mine.

3. Past and Present, p.204.

4. ¹⁰ Heroes, pp56,7. In one paragraph, he identifies obedience to the Law of God, the resignation of Job, Denial of Self, and Annihilation of Self. This is but one of innumerable examples to warn us against pinning Carlyle down to precise meanings!

5. Past and Present, p.179.

6. Heroes, p.57.

Summarizing Carlyle's answer to the human problem and the problem of evil,¹ we must observe that it was essentially the Christian one, but usually under the terms of idealism. The "Everlasting Yea" seems to stress the problem as the contradiction between the infinite and the finite, in man, as if man's evil arose from the trammelling of man's infinite desire and aspiration by finite necessity. "Our life is compassed round with Necessity; yet is the meaning of Life itself no other than Freedom"¹. The mystic way of seeking to escape from finitude by the annihilation of the self, the idealist way of becoming free from individuality by concentrating upon the only real realm, that of universal ideas, were admittedly appealing to him. But when it came to the diagnosis of man's dilemma, he made it as his fathers made it, and expressed it in terms of man's inordinate self-assertiveness against the order of God. This prideful pursuit of happiness was the essence of moral evil, which was, in turn, the parent of most of the physical evil in the world, such as the poverty of the French people under the ancien regime.² The cure for this was self-denial, for if men can live together demanding nothing from their fellows, there will be harmony among them. The fact that Carlyle does not often use the terms "sin", "guilt", and "repentance" should not cause us to underestimate the Christian spirit of his anthropology. He does, at any rate,

1. Sartor, p.146.

2. French Revolution, 1, p.36.

tell us that Teufelsdröckh's greatest restlessness was when he felt himself not guilty,¹ and his greatest peace was when he had conquered his self-conceit. He would not have said that humility was the beginning of moral life, if there had not been strong overtones of Christianity playing in his mind. Carlyle became more and more the moralist as he grew older, but he was never a "simple moralist" telling men it was easy to obey God's laws. There were many moments when he was as depressed as St. Paul ("Unhappy that I am") with the tragedy of man's moral predicament, and in these moments, he was contrite. The world has too long judged him for his moral rigor, interpreting it as self-righteousness, but this is unfair; we must see the inner man, the man of the journals and the Reminiscences, who was capable of contrition. It was no Pharisee that wrote, "Of all acts, is not, for a man, repentance the most divine? The deadliest sin, I say, were that same supercilious consciousness of no sin;-- that is death; the heart so conscious is divorced from sincerity, humility, and fact; is dead: it is 'pure' as dead dry sand is² pure".

1. Sartor, p.127
2. Heroes, pp 46,7.

CHAPTER FIVE.

DUTY.

"The end of man is an action,
not a thought". (Aristotle,
Ethics, x, 9. 1.)

A Scottish proverb, familiar from his youth, summed up humorously the antithesis of Carlyle's religious impulse to activity: "Thou wouldst do little for God if the Devil were dead!"¹ He used it frequently in withering sarcasm against people with bad motives. Looked into, it is typically Calvinist wit, and of the essence of Carlyle's abhorrence of utilitarianism's preoccupation with reward and punishment. Calvinists who used it could hardly be accused of basing their good conduct upon the fear of hell! Of course, the shoe would fit those frightened by fire and brimstone into "good" behaviour, but it was an even better fit for utilitarians, basing good actions on the fear of pain. The Benthamite doctrine of creating legislation in order, solely by the threat of civil punishment, to deter men from anti-social acts, was, to Carlyle, not only a cowardly surrendering of human dignity, but an incredibly naive basis for public order, a "Morrison's Pill" (a patent medicine "cure-all"), he called it, in Past and Present. Like a Hebrew prophet, he scorned the thought of doing one's duty for any other reason than that it was one's duty, i.e., the command of God; consequences, either pleasurable or painful, are irrelevant to this high matter. "Dastards, knaves, are they that lust for

Pleasure, that tremble at Pain".¹ Carlyle had no cure-all for society other than a return of men, leaders and followers, to a sense of the religious nature of duty. "No man has worked, or can work, except religiously, not even the poor day-labourer, the weaver of your coat, the sewer of your shoes. All men, if they work not as in a Great Taskmaster's eye, will work wrong, work unhappily for themselves and you".² Carlyle's invented hero, Odin, believed that Hela was the destiny of "dastards". And Carlyle adds, in a reference to Christ that is reverent because it is oblique, "A greater than Odin has been here. A greater than Odin has taught us--not a greater Dastardism, I hope!"

The unrelenting activity of a long life, fixed permanently for us in thirty volumes, every page of which was written with the God of action pulling and pushing him, is the outward sign of an inward faith in activity as not only man's duty, but his salvation.

This faith was chiefly the inheritance of his upbringing. The Calvinist concentration upon obedience to the will of God, with moral activity so intense because of the clearly apprehended brevity of life, and because of the invigorating challenge of a God who chooses His elect, had molded his spirit. It was "the root of deeper earnestness"³ in Teufelsdröckh, the earnestness that made the more easy-going Jeffrey uncomfortable.

1. Past and Present, p. 232.

2. Ibid., pp. 206, 7.

3. Sartor, p. 79.

Carlyle is remembered today more for his "gospel of work" than for his "worship of sorrow". And to his own optimistic, hard-working age, it was natural that the charge to work should be listened to more readily than the charge to renounce. His voice gave expression to the spirit of an expanding industrial revolution, the spirit depicted in art in Ford Madox Brown's painting Work, a scene of bustling workmen with Carlyle standing by. The artist's biographer refers to Brown's much-thumbed copy of Past and Present with all the "gospel of work" passages pencil-marked.¹

As a spiritual phenomenon, this emphasis on activity had emerged in the bourgeois revolt against the passivity and the static forms of feudal culture, and had been given a religious depth in the adoption of Calvinism by the mercantile classes. While it was religiously motivated in the 17th century, after the ravages of 18th century scepticism, it became, in the 19th century, an antidote against doubt. It was as though European man, robbed of his belief in a divine command to be busy in the world, instead of relapsing into passivity and lethargy, had prodded himself into even more intense application in this world, now seen as the only real world. It was no longer possible, in the language of Sartor, to "know himself"; he can only "know what he can work at". The religious categories: man, as the child of God, born into ~~His~~ creation as a free being, and given dominion "over all the earth", a stewardship

1. F.M. Haeffer, Ford Madox Brown, London, 1896, p. 195.

We shall see that Carlyle's doctrine of silence and his doctrine of work are two sides of the same coin. For his silence on all theological questions was a kind of confession of the limited nature of man's knowledge of God, the pain of which could be distracted only by absorption in the "nearest duty".

Thus it is that we must see the connection between renunciation and work in Carlyle. For renunciation means more than the conquest over physical indulgence, and personal ambition; it meant for him also the renunciation of the desire to know as God knows, the acceptance, with St. Paul, of the fragmentary character of human knowledge.¹ Carlyle had noted that Faust had had his inordinate speculative passion resolved, at the end of his life, in work, as a landed proprietor and an improver of agriculture, redeeming waste lands by the sea. Evidently, this was sufficient in his creator's mind to redeem him, for at his death, he is received into heaven, his long-time contract with the devil notwithstanding--a conclusion which must have offended even Carlyle's ethical sense!

Goethe, not only in his writings, but also in his personal life, appealed to Carlyle as a man who had transmuted his spiritual suffering into work. In the Lectures on Literature, he took occasion to tell of the reply Goethe had made to

1. I Cor. xiii.12. But Carlyle, unlike St. Paul, is violent in pushing aside as useless all ultimate questions relative to the nature of man: "Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules!" (Past and Present, p. 196).

somebody commenting on his portrait, "Voila un homme qui a eu beaucoup de chagrins". "No"; he had replied, "but of one

rather who has turned his suffering into useful work".¹

Both Goethe and Carlyle meant, of course, not physical suffering, but the suffering of speculative frustration, the agony peculiar to the truth-seeking man. Carlyle had been startled in his "Faustian period", and at length brought to terms with his universe by Goethe's message in Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre that "doubt of any kind can be removed by nothing but activity".¹ It was not an entirely new

revelation. We remember that at the beginning of his "Edinburgh purgatory", Carlyle had written to a friend, in re stoicism, that he was convinced he "ought not only to suffer but to act", that he must "mingle in the busy current" of life.²

The detachment of the stoic creed had offended his native Calvinism before Goethe's call to activity, and when he read Wilhelm Meister it was only to have the Biblical basis of his determination to act confirmed. It was the Bible that provided texts for Carlyle's last and climactic sentences in the "Everlasting Yea": "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh wherein no man can work".

1. Vol. 1, p. 386.

2. See supra, p. 77.

3. Eccles. ix.10 and St. John ix.4 (slightly adapted).

The sense of life's brevity,¹ the more or less constant awareness of death lurking around the next corner, lent to Carlyle's thought an intense urgency. It was not melancholy but realism that taught him that its imminent termination was an essential part of life's meaning. "What a wretched stroller's farce were life throughout, did not the great black curtain of Death hang ever in the background: great as Eternity, inscrutable as God!" he wrote to a friend.² Man's life was to him a flitting "from Eternity onwards to Eternity",³ and his position in this "conflux of eternities" by its very precariousness, adds urgency to the duty that lies nearest.

Not only the boundary of death, but also the stubborn refusal of life's oracle to give any satisfactory answers to ultimate questions, impelled Carlyle to adopt Goethe's doctrine of activity. Having in work freed himself from doubt, he goes so far as to call doubt a good thing. In his essay, we see clearly the connection in his mind between man's situation of limited knowledge and the idea of activity. "We, the whole species of Mankind, and our whole existence and history, are

1. "Time devours all his Children: only by incessant Running, by incessant Working, may you (for some three-score-and-ten years) escape him; and you too he devours at last". (Sartor. p. 103). "Behold, the day is passing swiftly over, our life is passing swiftly over... The night once come, our happiness, our unhappiness,-- it is all abolished, vanished, clean gone... But our work,-- behold that is not abolished... our work... for endless Times and Eternities, remains". (Past and Present, p. 156).
2. Letter to Spedding, Aug. 2, 1839, "T.C. and Thomas Spedding, their Friendship and Correspondence", Cornhill Magazine, May, 1921, new ser., vol. I, p. 520.
3. Sartor. p. 16.

but a floating speck on the illimitable ocean of the All; yet in that ocean; indissoluble portion thereof; partaking of its infinite tendencies: borne this way and that by its deep-swelling tides, and grand ocean currents;--of which what faintest chance is there that we should ever exhaust the significance, ascertain the goings and comings? A region of Doubt, therefore, hovers forever in the background: in Action alone can we have certainty. Nay properly Doubt is the indispensable inexhaustible material whereon Action works, which Action has to fashion into Certainty and Reality; only on a canvas of Darkness, such is man's way of being, could the many-coloured picture of our Life paint itself and shine".¹

To act was to find one's freedom over and above the limitations of finiteness, as well as a palliative for the limitations of speculation. In full revolt against the determinism of 18th century mechanism, Carlyle was always insisting that man is a free being. "It is the deep commandment, dimmer or clearer, of our whole being, to be free".² But the attainment of this freedom is no easy matter. Interpreting Burns, Carlyle laments the poet's dissipation, and uses it as an illustration to deride that species of anti-nomianism which prescribes a full measure of pleasure-seeking as a prerequisite to attaining manhood. Carlyle had too sober a view of man's insatiable love of self-indulgence to ever think that

1. "Characteristics", Essays, iii, pp. 25,6.

2. French Revolution, I, p. 183.

it could be dispelled by a provisional acquiescence. Burns' tragic end was a proof to him of this. On the contrary, he said, "We become men, not after we have been dissipated, and disappointed in the chase of false pleasure; but after we have ascertained, in any way, what impassable barriers hem us in through this life; how mad it is to hope for contentment to our infinite soul from the gifts of this extremely finite world; that a man must be sufficient for himself; and that for suffering and enduring there is no remedy but striving and doing. Manhood begins when we have in any way made truce with Necessity; begins even when we have surrendered to Necessity, as the most part only do; but begins joyfully and hopefully only when we have reconciled ourselves to Necessity; and thus, in reality, triumphed over it, and felt that in Necessity we are free".¹ Thus, in Carlyle's thought did the sternness of life, together with the darkness of the mind, force man to act, and so find himself. It is clear, from Sartor, and his essay on Burns, that Carlyle was grateful for his early education in life's sternness. The paradox of finding freedom through Necessity is "the grand lesson for every mortal man", and he goes on, in a way that reveals his awareness of the remarkable similarity between the simple, devout home of Burns and his own, to comment that this lesson is "better learned from the lips of a devout mother, in the looks and actions of a devout father, while the heart is yet soft and pliant, than in collision with the sharp adamant of Fate, attracting us to shipwreck us, when the heart is grown hard, and may be broken before it will become contrite. Had Burns continued to learn this, as he was

1. "Burns", Essays, i, p. 295.

already learning it, in his father's cottage, he would have learned it fully, which he never did; and been saved many a lasting aberration, many a bitter hour and year of remorseful sorrow".¹

That Carlyle meant by "necessity" the authority of divine moral law, always present behind parental authority,² and that freedom was not freedom from that law, but through it, is clear in all his writings. He, in fact, defines the free man as one "who is loyal to the Laws of this Universe..He that will go gladly to his labour and suffering, it is to him alone that the Upper Powers are favourable and the Field of Time will yield fruit...The essence of all religion, that was and that will be, is to make men free".³ Carlyle had been taught to believe in the absolutely just despotism of a sovereign God. With rather too uncritical facility, he transferred a part of this belief to reverence for the hero-revealer of God's will, and accorded him the place of the divine Despot. Consequently, all his discussion of freedom was within the terms of just despotism, a characteristic that thoroughly rankled most of his contemporaries to whom freedom meant freedom from restraint. "To reconcile Despotism with Freedom:--well, is that such a mystery? Do you not already know the way? It is to make your Despotism just. Rigorous as Destiny; but just too, as Destiny and its Laws. The Laws of God: all men obey these, and have no 'Freedom' at all but in obeying them".⁴

1. Ibid.

2. Growing up meant for Teufelsdröckh the transformation of "the ring of Necessity" into the "ring of Duty" (Sartor p.78).

3. Latter-Day Pamphlets, p.251.

4. Past and Present, p. 282.

Writing of the "Signs of 'the Times" in 1829, of the world-wide restless striving for political freedom, he reminded his readers of a "higher, heavenly freedom", and quoted St. Paul in calling it "man's reasonable service".¹

The story of Wilhelm Meister had struck Carlyle by its stress on activity, but it must be noted that, as with renunciation, activity to Goethe was merely a factor in self-development, or Bildung. Goethe's liberation from his Faustian period was reflected in his condemnation of fruitless, ingrown speculation in Wilhelm Meister. There was a profound psychological insight in his insistence that "for man there is but one misfortune; when some idea lays hold of him, which exerts no influence upon active life, or still more, which withdraws him from it".² The hero of this novel had wandered aimlessly in search of activity that would give him self-expression, had deluded himself for a while that he could succeed as an actor. Goethe moralizes over him thus: "Most part of all the misery and mischief, of all that is denominated evil, in the world, arises from the fact that men are too remiss to get a proper knowledge of their aims, and when they do know them, to work intensely in attaining them".³ Carlyle's own experience, trying two professions before fixing upon a third, comparatively late in life, was a case in point.

This self-discipline in the crystallization of one's capabilities and aims appealed to Carlyle, and to it he added

1. Rom.xii,1 in Essays, ii, p. 82.

2. Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, i, p. 387.

3. Ibid, p.445.

greater religious depth and height in the predominantly puritan concept of "the infinite nature of duty". He used the word "conscience" (though not frequently, because it was too weak a word to signify the central reality of man's spirit),¹ but he meant something far more intensely urgent than this over-used term has come to mean. With the "infinite nature of duty", he stressed the same religious quality that applied to moral action in the centuries of faith. To perform a good act was to bring one into the heights of heaven, because it was done in answer to God's Will. To be guilty of a bad act was to be cast into the depths of hell, because it was done in obedience to the devil. When one compares this religious quality of duty with the rationally calculated utilitarianism then prevailing, can Carlyle be blamed for his nostalgia for the "ages of faith"? His description of Abbot Samson's spiritual environment is beautiful: "The great antique heart: how like a child's in its simplicity, like a man's in its earnest solemnity and depth! Heaven lies over him wheresoever he goes or stands on the Earth; making all the Earth a mystic Temple to him, the Earth's business all a kind of worship. Glimpses of bright creatures flash in the common sunlight; angels yet hover doing God's messages among men: that rainbow was set in the clouds by the hand of God! Wonder, miracle encompass the man; he lives in an element of miracle; Heaven's splendour over his head, Hell's darkness under his feet. A great Law of Duty, high as these two Infinitudes, dwarfing all

1. It is "the central part of all with us; a ray as of Eternity and Immortality, immured in dusky many-coloured Time, and its deaths and births" (Past and Present, p. 109).

else, annihilating all else ... 'Rude poetic ages'?...Oh, for God's sake, good reader, talk no more of all that! It was not a Dilettantism this of Abbot Samson. It was a Reality, and it is one. The garment only of it is dead; the essence of it lives through all Time and all Eternity!"¹

The Biblical nature of Carlyle's concept of duty is clearly evident in his prophetic treatment of the ill-destined French "Federation Oaths" of 1790. They stood for him as the very type of man liberating himself from divine authority and asserting his autonomous will. The Revolution ended in a Reign of Terror because of this disastrous "liberation", brought about by decades of French philosophical scepticism. "Lift off the pressure of command from so many millions; all pressure or binding rule, except such melodramatic Federation Oath as they have bound themselves with! For Thou shalt was from of old the condition of man's being, and his weal and blessedness was in obeying that. Wo for him when, were it on the hest of the clearest necessity, rebellion, disloyal isolation, and mere I will, becomes his rule! But the Gospel of Jean-Jacques has come, and the first Sacrament of it has been celebrated..."² He compared it ironically with the very different spiritual atmosphere of the Solemn League and Covenant, sworn by the Scots "believing in a righteous heaven above them, and also in a Gospel far other than the Jean-Jacques one... in their

1. Ibid, p. 116.

2. French Revolution, ii, p. 106.

tough Old-Saxon Hebrew-Presbyterian way".¹ Carlyle takes his stand on the Hebrew-Presbyterian side: the religious conception of duty in Biblical terms of Thou shalt rather than the humanistic conception of I will.

It was probably the highly practical nature of Goethe's call to the nearest duty which appealed most of all to Carlyle. Goethe's biographer quotes a revealing letter, "I look neither to the right nor to the left, and my old motto is always copied above a new office: 'Hic est aut nusquam, quod quaerimus'",² which is interesting to us, because the same idea was made the principal motive for the conduct of his ideal character, Lothario, in Wilhelm Meister. This person voices Goethe's attitude. "I feel through my whole heart how foolishly we let our time pass on". He proposes some extraordinarily charitable arrangements for tenants of his lands while it is yet time, since he believes his death to be imminent. Defending these concrete measures against the remonstrances of his friend, he declares, "O my friend! it is ever thus; it is ever the besetting fault of cultivated men, that they wish to spend their whole resources on some idea, scarcely any part of them on tangible existing objects". Then recalling his adventures in the American Revolution, in search of a "cause", he says, "In America, I fancied I might accomplish something; over seas, I hoped to become useful and essential; if any task was not begirt with a thousand dangers, I considered it trivial, unworthy

1. Ibid., p.44.

2. Bielschowsky, op.cit., 1, pp. 359,60.

of me. How differently do matters now appear! How precious, how important seems the duty which is nearest me, whatever it may be!" His friend then remembers the letter Lothario had written home from his unsuccessful exile: "I will return, and in my house, amid my fields, among my people, I will say, Here or nowhere is America!" Then commenting disapprovingly on his brother's misguided generosity to the religious community of Herrnhut offered for the salvation of his soul, he abruptly orders his land arrangements to be carried out with the words, "Here or nowhere is Herrnhut!"¹ Carlyle himself had once had thoughts of emigrating to America; he knew the mirage of "another place" that welcomes the despairing wanderer.² And through Goethe he discovered that "emigration is the false solution of those unconsciously in quest of the unlimited".³ With Wilhelm, he was so impressed with Lothario's practical advice that he constantly re-echoed the hero's words for the rest of his life, whenever he was approached for counsel, "There where thou art, where thou remainest, accomplish what thou canst..."⁴

Harrold⁵ points out that it was not the place of duty that was important to Carlyle, but the time, and cites his frequent

1. Wilhelm Meister, ii, pp. 11, 12.
2. See the interesting letter (Jan. 8, 1819) to Johnstone in which Carlyle attempts to dissuade him from emigrating, but on the plea that he would be cut off from his homeland and unhappy in a strange new culture. He had yet to learn Goethe's better reason! (Early Letters, i, pp. 204f).
3. Harrold, op.cit., p. 209.
4. Wilhelm Meister, ii, p. 54. And, in counselling himself, as well. Desiring to go to Weimar to undertake research for a biography of Luther, he remembers Goethe's maxim and admonishes himself, "Take the task which is nearest thee!" (Two Notebooks, p. 155).
5. Op.cit., p. 213.

quotation of Goethe's lines from the West-Oestlicher Divan,

"Mein Vermächtniss, wie Herrlich weit und breit!
Die Zeit ist mein Vermächtniss, mein Acker ist die Zeit".¹

Time is all-important, for one's "Today" is all too short:

"work while it is yet Today".

One might think that Carlyle had Kant to thank for his liberation from a utilitarian ethic, since, in general, the conception of duty is similar in both thinkers. The only lines from Kant which Carlyle ever quoted are from the Critique of Practical Reason. He wrote in "Shooting Niagara", "Two things strike me dumb: the infinite Starry Heaven; and the Sense of Right and Wrong in Man. Visible Infinities, both, say nothing of them; don't try to 'account for them'; for you can say nothing wise".² Thus was Kant used in support of his gospel of silence, placing duty above metaphysical analysis. In the essay on Johnson, he does commend him for possessing man's "highest gospel", that of the knowledge of the "transcendental, immeasurable character of duty".³ But, actually, as Harrold has pointed out,⁴ it is improbable that he ever studied more than a part of the Critique of Pure Reason. Suspicious as he was of rational analysis, he would naturally not have been

1. Carlyle's translation:

"My inheritance, how wide and fair!

Time is my fair seed-field, of Time I'm heir".

It is used as the inscription for Sartor. See also his second essay on Richter and "Characteristics" (Essays, ii, p.133, and iii, p.43 respectively).

2. Essays, v, p.29.

3. "Boswell's Life of Johnson", Essays, iii, pp.110,11.

4. Op.cit., p.12.

attracted to the technical discussion of either the Critique of Practical Reason or the Metaphysic of Morals. And when we come to compare the "categorical imperative" with "the infinite nature of duty" we see little resemblance. "So act that thy maxims of will might become law in a system of universal moral legislation", though better than a utilitarian ethic, is still a purely rational morality, and does not partake of the religious dimensions of Carlyle's concept, which stresses the divine command, Thou shalt, and conceives of moral law as originating in God's Will, rather than the coherence of human reason. Carlyle felt a debt to Kant, for his attack upon empiricism and materialism, as we shall see, but not, particularly, for his ethics.

It is important to lay down an essential qualification when we stress the Biblical origin and nature of Carlyle's sense of duty. Though he inherited the Calvinist emphasis on work, to be carried on under the "great Taskmaster's eye", he did not inherit Calvinism's fundamental pessimism in regard to man's total corruption, and his inability to redeem himself by moral effort. Carlyle is a thorough-going moralist, and a thorough-going Pelagian in his conception of human freedom. A pessimist when facing the real world of human evil, Carlyle is a theoretical optimist in regard to man's moral capacity to obey divine law. He does not fully comprehend, as did the Reformation Protestantism he so admired (it must be admitted, as a historical, rather than a theological phenomenon), the tragic, humanly

insurmountable obstacles that lie between "I ought" and "I can". Carlyle has no doctrine of original sin. The command of God implies the ability of man to obey. "Canst and Shalt, if they are very well understood, mean the same thing under this Sun of ours", he wrote to Emerson.¹ Here is the real source of the intensity of Carlyle's moral preaching. Reinhold Niebuhr points out how the Pelagian is always intent on increasing the sense of responsibility for individual sinful acts which is thought to be deadened under the fundamental pessimism of Augustinian teaching.² Carlyle's polemic, of course, was not directed against Augustinianism, but against the shallow doctrines of liberalism, directed to making men good by social legislation. He was more aware that the battle between good and evil was fought out in the human will, but he had no thought of any tragic bondage of that will. Consequently, Carlyle was out of sympathy with the historic Christian remedy of salvation, because he felt no need for a supernatural act of redemption from beyond man. We have seen that the Cross meant to him the exaltation of human martyrdom; its other and deeper meaning, the condescension of divine love meeting man's inextricable involvement in sin, he did not see. Carlyle's was a soteriology of moral endeavor.³ It is no wonder, therefore, that his

1. Correspondence, i, p.108.

2. Op.cit., i, pp.246ff.

3. See his vehement comment to Knighton, "If I were a preacher, I would tell them on Sunday what to do, and then, when they came back next Sunday, I would ask them, 'Well, have you done that? How much have you done of it? None! Then go home and do it'". (W. Knighton, "Conversations with Carlyle", Contemporary Review, vol.XXXIX, June, 1881, p.914).

realism about the extent of human evil around him drove him to a despair which the simpler Victorian moralists did not suffer. Theories of dyspepsia are quite unnecessary to explain Carlyle when we appreciate how the really earnest moralist is always driven to despair. St. Paul's pre-Christian experience is the classical expression. "If it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin;... the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me".¹ The awful juxtaposition of the commands of an absolutely righteous God to the deep and seemingly ineradicable egocentricity of man always reduces to despair the moralist who takes both these things seriously, and has no resource other than the constant renewal of moral effort, the constant preaching of "duty". To be a "Calvinist without the theology", that is, to possess the whole depth of Calvinism's appreciation of man's duty to obey the law of God without the theology of a divine redeeming love which lifts him out of the intolerable situation consequent upon this, is indeed entirely sufficient to explain "the touch of terror"² in Carlyle's religion. He illustrates how much more uncomfortable it is to be a partial Christian than to be no Christian at all, for while clinging to the human side of Christianity, the side of "self-denial" and "duty", he had lost the divine and most important side, that of the intervention of God, redeeming repentant men. In reverting to the moralism of the Old Testament prophets, he had quite jumped the message of

1. Rom. vii, 7,10.

2. H.S. Wilson, History and Criticism, London, 1896, p.255.

the New Testament. Like them, he wailed over human disobedience, and like them, his only hope lay in a coming period of history, when the age of belief would succeed the present period of unbelief.

With this appreciation of Carlyle's soteriology, we can understand why "work as worship" was a favorite theme. For it follows that what redeems one is the occasion for worship. This was the dominant theme of Past and Present, which made a convert of Tyndall, who said, "Concerning the claims of duty and the dignity of work, never man spake like this man".¹ He fixed upon the medieval monastic motto, laborare est orare, as the text for his sermon, and elaborated upon it in a hundred ways. Work is the reducing of disorder to order, "a making of madness sane", it is the battle with ignorance and superstition, it is the poetic act of bringing the Unseen into the seen world. It is the "one Liturgy which does remain forever unexceptionable: that of Praying (as the old Monks did withal) by Working... 'Work is Worship': yes, in a highly considerable sense,--which, in the present state of all 'worship', who is there that can unfold! He that understands it well, understands the Prophecy of the whole Future; the last Evangel, which has included all others".²

1. Barrett, op.cit., p. 69.

2. Past and Present, pp. 232,33.

CHAPTER SIX.

Carlyle's Weltanschauung.

"Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning,
 And the heavens are the work of thy hands;
 They will perish, but thou remainest;
 They will all grow old like a garment,
 Like a mantle thou wilt roll them up,
 And they will be changed.
 But thou art the same,
 And thy years will never end". (Ps. 102: 25-7).

In the attempt to clarify Carlyle's Weltanschauung, and his ideas relative to the problem of knowledge, we should be misled to look for anything like a philosophic system. An almost congenital revulsion against the sober processes of logical deduction made systematic formulations of his thought impossible. This was in part a matter of temperament, and in part the result of the discovery of the limitations of mathematical analysis. A rationalist preoccupation with mathematics in his youth, artificially imposed upon a spirit cultivated in a pious home where supra-rational considerations of man's duty and destiny were paramount, was, psychologically, almost bound to produce a romantic revolt against all forms of rationalism. Carlyle could not fulfil his religious nature within the terms of the science and mathematics which had allured him during his formative years. The attempt had been made, but it was doomed to failure. Writing in 1816 to Mitchell in dissatisfaction with the results of reading Stewart's history of philosophy, he declared, "I return always to the study of Physics with more pleasure after trying the 'philosophy of Mind!' It is delightful, after wandering in

the thick darkness of metaphysics, to behold again the fair face of truth. When will there arise a man who will do for the science of Mind what Newton did for that of Matter-- establish its fundamental laws on the firm basis of induction-- and discard for ever those absurd theories that so many dreamers have devised?"¹

Answering to his own question--"never", Carlyle was, even this early, admitting the questionable character of his search for truth, but he remained for some years enamoured of mathematical inquiry. When his emancipation came, it was not through philosophy, but German literature. By 1820, even a slight study of Schiller and Goethe was revealing "a new Heaven and a new Earth" to him.² They were his rescuers because they led him out of the incubus of a materialist view of the universe into the wider reaches of idealism.

The world-view offered to him by 18th century philosophy, and Hume in particular, had been mechanistic. Asking for bread, he was given a stone, such as these words of Hume, "Could men anatomize nature, according to the most probable, at least the most intelligible philosophy, they would find that these causes are nothing but the particular fabric and structure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external objects; and that, by a regular and constant machinery, all the events

1. Early Letters, 1, p.81.

2. See his letter of Aug. 4, 1820, in Conway, op.cit., p.184.

are produced, about which they are so much concerned".¹ The remote Architect-god presiding over this dead, mechanical universe was so different a deity from the ever-present Creator and Judge of the Christian faith as to be no real God at all. The theology of deism he came to deride as "faint, possible Theism", described in the essay on Diderot as that which "forms our common English creed", which must be got rid of. It was "a polite figure of speech"; its "theoretical God a mere distant Simulacrum". Goethe's revolt against mechanism and deism had led the way. "Think ye", he was quoted by his disciple, "that God made the Universe, and then let it run round his finger (am Finger laufen liesse)?" Carlyle recognized that the deistic, mechanistic world view was leading to atheism, for the Architect was unessential to an autonomous universe of cause and effect. In this regard, Carlyle was an accurate prophet of contemporary positivism, a wholly this-worldly philosophy, which has sloughed off all the deistic vestiges of a "faint, possible Theism". Carlyle used Richter's words to express the consequences of this world-view, which makes "of the aether a gas, of God a force, of the second world a coffin".²

The attempt by Paley and others to put a mechanistic world-view into the service of natural theology, to use the intricate machine-like aspect of animals and plants as

1. The Natural History of Religion, sect. iii, The Philosophical Works of David Hume, Boston, 1854, vol. iv, pp.428,9.
2. See the second essay on Richter, Essays, iii, pp.233,4.

teleological evidence for the existence of a designing God, might, conceivably, have provided the solution for Carlyle's search for a world-view. Paley's Natural Theology: or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, published in 1802, was very widely discussed in Carlyle's youth. Its ingenious argument from the intricacy of the parts, (e.g., the eye) of organisms, to delicate balance between them and their environment, to an intelligent divine mind¹ might be expected to have convinced a young inquirer with a scientific bent of mind. It is true that Carlyle excepted Paley from the class of "apologists" who merely denounced scepticism (including Chalmers, whose Discourses appeared to him to be of this negative sort).² Why is it, then, that, as he recalled, he had approached such apologetic evidence "with the greatest desire to be convinced, but in vain?"³ One reason is, doubtless, the inadequacy of the type of sober, unimaginative writing like that of Paley's undistinguished pen, to carry conviction home to Carlyle's more poetic heart. Paley wrote in the same rather arid rational vein as did his own opponents. But a far more significant reason for Carlyle's coldness was the instinctive suspicion of a deep religious spirit of any proofs of the existence of God. It is not likely that one who was accustomed to hearing the name of God called upon in his own home morning and night would be moved by any rational

1. "The marks of design" wrote Paley, "are too strong to be got over. Design must have had a designer. That designer must have been a person. That person is God" (the edition of London, 1802, p.473).
2. See Early Letters, i, p. 109.
3. Italics mine. Wilson, i, p.79.

arguments to prove His reality, however ingenious. To Carlyle, God must either be, as he had been taught, omnipresent, immanent, and Divine Being must be "before all being", and so not in need of mere human "proof", or He must not be real at all, and so irrelevant to proofs. With a true instinct like that of Kierkegaard¹, he felt that a proveable God was only "faintly possible", and that a God really worth worshipping must be offended by the impudence of "arguments" on His behalf. In the 1838 lectures, Carlyle called the "defenders of Christianity" sceptics, "for ever trying to prove the truth of their doctrines by logical evidences".² We say "instinct" because at the time of reading the "evidences" he did not know why he was not convinced; that was discovered later, when new meaning was poured into the old doctrine of the omnipresence of God. "Proof of a God?" he cries, "A probable God! The smallest of Finites

1. "So, let us mock God, out and out, as has been done before in the world--this is always preferable to the disparaging air of importance with which one would prove God's existence. For to prove the existence of one who is present is the most shameless affront, since it is an attempt to make him ridiculous; but unfortunately people have no inkling of this, and for sheer seriousness regard it as a pious undertaking. But how could it occur to anybody to prove that he exists, unless one had permitted oneself to ignore him, and now makes the thing worse by proving his existence before his very nose? The existence of a king, or his presence, is commonly acknowledged by an appropriate expression of subjection and submission--what if in his sublime presence one were to prove that he existed? Is that the way to prove it? No, that would be making a fool of him; for one proves his presence by an expression of submission which may assume various forms according to the customs of the country--and thus it is also that one proves God's existence by worship".
(Unscientific Postscript, trans. by Swenson, London, 1941, p.485).
2. Lectures on Literature, p. 166.

struggling to prove to itself, that is to say if we will consider it, to picture-out and arrange as diagram, and include within itself, the Highest Infinite; in which, by hypothesis, it lives, and moves, and has its being!" This, he says, will one day (perhaps our own?) seem a "miraculous" business, and as ludicrous as a man wandering about with sulphur-matches and rushlights searching for the sun!¹ He gives an evaluation of natural theology, its false pretences, and justified uses, which would be worthy of any modern exponent of revealed theology! "All speculations of the sort we call Natural Theology, endeavouring to prove the beginning of all Belief by some Belief earlier than the beginning, are barren, ineffectual, impossible...To all open men it will indeed always be a favourite contemplation, that of watching the ways of Being, how animate adjusts itself to inanimate, rational to irrational, and this that we name Nature is not a desolate phantasm of a chaos, but a wondrous existence and reality. If, moreover, in those same 'marks of design', as he has called them, the contemplative man finds new evidence of a designing Maker, be it well for him: meanwhile, surely one would think, the still clearer evidence lay nearer home,-- in the contemplative man's own head that seeks after such! In which point of view our extant Natural Theologies, as our innumerable Evidences of the Christian Religion, and suchlike, may, in reference to the strange season they appear in, have a certain value, and be worth printing and reprinting:

1. This humorous metaphor was applied by Carlyle to Paley, in his journal (Froude, 1, p.374).

only let us understand for whom, and how, they are valuable; and be nowise wroth with the poor Atheist, whom they have not convinced, and could not, and should not convince".¹ Arguments for the existence of God are meaningful then, to those who, by faith, already assume His existence; they are irrelevant to those who do not possess this faith. Both the godly and the ungodly see in nature the confirmation of their beliefs. In Wotton Reinfred, Carlyle had written, "The Book of Nature is written in such strange intertisted characters, that you may spell from among them a few words in any alphabet...So each walks by his own hornbook, and whatever contradicts the hornbook is no letter but a flourish. As the fool thinks, the bell clinks, our adage says; and so it is here as well as elsewhere."²

Carlyle remained discontented until he had rediscovered the power of a present God. This was not possible until the limitations of knowledge to the realm of sensations in empirical philosophy had been broken through. We see him expressing his suspicions in his journal: "Empiricism, if consistent, they say, leads direct to Atheism!--I am afraid it does".³ Describing the character of empiricism later, he said, "All was brought down to a system of cause and effect, of one thing pushing another thing on, by certain laws of physics,--gravitation,-- a visible material kind of shoving. A dim huge, immeasurable steam-engine they had made of this world".⁴ This was "the

1. "Diderot", Essays, iii, p.232.

2. Pp. 75,6.

3. Two Notebooks, p. 102.

4. Lectures on Literature, p. 169.

grand Idolatry" of materialism, which has always been the enemy of the worship of the Invisible.¹ In submitting to it men had lost tidings of their souls, as in the Moslem legend of the men who ignored Moses' teaching and were changed into apes by the Dead Sea, superbly recounted in the satire of Past and Present.² "The Visible becomes the Bestial when it rests not on the Invisible", he wrote to Emerson.³

Reading Faust in 1820, Carlyle had seen a finger-post pointing beyond materialism to the Invisible in a poetic figure of speech. Poet that he was, this brought him eventually to Sartor's "philosophy of clothes", the only kind of "philosophy" which he could elucidate. It was the familiar Song of the Earth-Spirit:

In Lebensfluten, in Tatensturm
 Wall' ich auf und ab,
 Webe hin und her!
 Geburt und Grab,
 Ein ewiges Meer,
 Ein wechselnd Weben,
 Ein glühend Leben,
 So schaff' ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit
 Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.

Carlyle translated:

In Being's floods, in Action's storm,
 I walk and work, above, beneath,
 Work and weave in endless motion!
 Birth and Death,
 An Infinite Ocean;
 A seizing and giving
 The fire of Living:
 'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply,
 And weave for God the Garment thou seest Him by.⁴

1. Essays, i, p.79.

2. Fp. 152,3.

3. Correspondence, i, p.67.

4. Sartor, p.43. The idea of nature as a garment was not unfamiliar to Carlyle if he remembered the image as it is used in the Bible. "The earth shall wax old like a garment.. but my salvation shall be forever", are Isaiah's words (ch. 51, v.6). Cf. Ps. 102:25-7, quoted as the inscription heading of this chapter.

We have seen how the first announcement of delivery came to Teufelsdröckh in the form of an awareness of the spirit behind and in nature. Goethe's writings were full of suggestions to turn to nature for revelation, to seek the Infinite in the finite. Bielschowsky tells us of the vehemence with which he rejected the orthodox separation of God and nature.¹

Carlyle's gratitude to the German romantics was profound.

"They have penetrated into the Mystery of Nature...

...all Nature's thousand changes
But one changeless God proclaim".²

Since orthodoxy's claim of revelation had become meaningless, we can imagine the effect on Carlyle of such a passage from Wilhelm Meister as the following: "Ask not the echoes of your cloisters, not your mouldering parchments, not your narrow whims, and ordinances! Ask Nature and your heart; she will teach you what you should recoil from; she will point out to you with the strictest finger, over what she has pronounced her everlasting curse".³ Nature is her own law; what she approves, she sustains; what she disapproves, she rejects. Nature, therefore, is her own revelation. By looking steadfastly at her, we may see for ourselves the truths that creeds have presumed to tell us on authority. "In this great Duel (of truth and falsehood), Nature herself is umpire, and can do no wrong: the thing which is deepest rooted in Nature, which we call truest, that thing and not the other, will be found growing at last".⁴ It is evident

1. "When..the separation of God from nature was given out as Christianity, he always flew to arms". (Op.cit.,ii,p.159).

2. "State of German Literature, Essays, i, pp.66,7.

3. ii, p. 163.

4. Heroes, p.61.

that Nature, while for Goethe it embraced the whole realm of divine beauty, as the basis for a pantheistic deity"whose dwelling is in the light of setting suns", for Carlyle, came to mean the unalterable moral structure of the universe.

The view of nature as "the garment of God", and the development of the doctrine of "natural supernaturalism" in Sartor have tempted some critics to rank Carlyle with the pantheists of the romantic school of poets. Thus, for example, Manning, in what seems like a perverse determination to misinterpret him, says that Carlyle is "in full sympathy with Pantheism", merely because of Carlyle's view of the world and history as an organic whole.¹ It must be admitted that Carlyle is ambiguous at this point. There are enough passages such as the exclamation in Sartor. "O Nature--or what is Nature! Ha! why do I not name thee God?" which, if isolated, seem clearly to label Carlyle as a pantheist. Richter's night-thoughts in Quintus Fixlein struck fire in Carlyle's mind: "I look up to the starry sky, and an everlasting chain stretches thither and over and below; and all is Life, and Warmth, and Light, and all is Godlike or God..."²

Carlyle displayed a sublime indifference, and, as his clerical acquaintances thought, a not admirable levity toward attempts to catalogue his religious conceptions, in this of pantheism, as well as in other matters. By way of absolving

1. Manning, Half-truths
2. "Richter", Essays, i, p.24.

himself for the one occasion when he had provoked his intimate friend Sterling's anger, he relates in his Life how certain utterances of his had evoked the exclamation from Sterling, "Flat Pantheism!...It is mere Pantheism, that!" Carlyle had retorted, "And suppose it were Pot-theism?...If the thing is true!"¹ Such humorous heterodoxy should at least caution us from trying to fit him into any kind of theological system. The "pantheistic strain" in Carlyle was never elevated into a rigid doctrine. Whatever he said about the "garment of God" existed side by side with perfectly "orthodox" affirmations: "What is there that we cannot love; since all was created by God?"² The thought that nature is God, and the belief that nature is created by God simply flowed in and out of each other, and were indistinguishable. There is enough to show that Carlyle was basically unsympathetic with doctrinaire pantheism. In his journal, he seems to have reflected that an identification of the world and God would lead to materialism and atheism. "Annihilation of the Subject (i.e., the Divine Subject).--Spinozism and Materialism".³ It is significant that Carlyle, at the behest of his teacher, was not led back by Goethe to his own much admired Spinoza, who as the proponent of a doctrinaire pantheism had anticipated in philosophy the development in romanticism by a hundred years. Evidently the early formulation of a belief in a transcendental Creator would never quite let him sit at Spinoza's

1. P.124.

2. Italics mine. Sartor, p.53.

3. Two Notebooks, p.112.

feet. In his later life, after the impulses peculiar to the romanticism of the early part of the century had subsided before the stronger forces of his resurgent puritanism, Carlyle showed almost no signs of the pantheistic nature-mysticism of his younger days. Travelling in Germany, to examine Frederick's battlefields, he referred to the beauties of Saxony's mountains only as admissible "if you like that sort of thing". To Allingham's suggestion that nature is a powerful help to religious feeling, his reply was full of hedging qualifications, "Ho, there's not much in that. A great deal of sham and affectation is in the raptures people express about Nature; ecstasy over mountains and waterfalls, etc. I perceive that most people really get much the same amount of good out of all that as I do myself; I have a kind of content in it; but any kind of Nature does well enough".¹ As for Goethe's growing inclination to examine nature under a microscope, he was very sceptical, surprising a mutual admirer with his criticism of the master's "peering into nature", his botanical and optical studies.² As the consistent pantheist intensified his examination of nature, the partial pantheist tended to lose more and more of his early ecstasy over nature as the vesture of the divine. The fact is that, in his youth, Carlyle had been so grateful to be relieved of materialism that he was quite indifferent to the distinction between pantheism and theism, between the belief that God was the

1. Op.cit., pp. 215,6.

2. Espinasse, op.cit., p.221.

world and the belief that He made the world. The perception of the world's spiritual significance was quite enough, and like Schiller's character in Don Carlos, whose words he translated¹, he was equally content with the presence or absence of a Christian doctrine of creation, providing the "everlasting laws" of God in the universe were perceived.

Hensel, the German scholar, has substituted the term panentheism for pantheism to describe Carlyle's view of the relation of nature and God.² We may be content with this providing that we see that it is essentially a philosophic synonym for the classical Christian doctrine of creation, which unites the transcendence with the immanence of God. It was expressed most succinctly by Carlyle in "Characteristics": "God not only made us and beholds us, but is in us, and around us".³ Christian thought at its best has always conceived of the Creator as both the original Former of the universe and the constant Preserver of its being. The heresy of deism was its unconcern with the latter. It was only natural that this hiatus should be filled by the reaction of romantic idealism, with its frequent pantheistic manifestations, laying a new stress upon the immanence of the divine spirit. It is not to be wondered at that Carlyle should have enthusiastically and

1. "Him the maker we behold not; calm
He veils himself in everlasting laws,
Which and not him the sceptic seeing exclaims,
'Wherefore a God? The World itself is God'.
And never did a Christian's adoration
So praise him as this sceptic's blasphemy".
(Life of Schiller, p.74).
2. "Seine Lehre ist nicht Pantheismus, sondern Panentheismus"
(P.Hensel, Carlyle, third revised ed., Stuttgart, 1922. p.68).
3. Essays, iii, p. 42.

uncritically embraced what it offered in place of an "absentee-God".

The importance of Goethe's pantheism to Carlyle was not so much that it divinized nature as that it provoked an awareness of the divine spirit behind and in nature. It was the discovery of a new world beyond the material world of cause and effect, of pleasure and pain, and in this discovery was the realization that it is the only real world, that spirit alone is real, and matter ephemeral. Above all, it gave an explanation of the divine origin of the sense of duty, obscured under utilitarianism, thereby vindicating the high moral sense of the creed of Ecclefechan.¹ He announced it like the discovery of a new continent to his contemporaries. "A faith in religion has again become possible and inevitable for the scientific mind, and the word Freethinker no longer means the Denier or Caviller, but the Reliever or the Ready to believe. Nay, in the higher literature of Germany there already lies for him that can read it the beginning of a new revelation of the Godlike, as yet unrecognized by the mass of the world, but waiting there for recognition, and sure to find it when the fit hour comes".² This new religion promised a spiritual freedom unknown in the century of scepticism, the freedom of souls who may learn to soar above mere matter and sensation. That it was his hope, as zealous as that of an early Christian missionary for the conversion of a barbarian nation, that his own England would

1. Harrold, op.cit., p.7.

2. "Characteristics", Essays, iii, p.41.

see it and embrace it, was revealed in his quotation of Richter's words at the close of the Lectures on Literature, "Thou, Eternal Providence, will cause the day to dawn".¹

We must consider, now, Carlyle's relation to German transcendentalism in connection with the duality of Reality and Appearance. Carlyle was led, after drinking deeply of German literature, to the Critical Philosophy of Kant and Fichte, where he believed he had found the philosophical justification for his new world-view. The exact relation of Carlyle to German philosophy has been admirably investigated, in detail, by Storrs² and Harrold. Any comment on this involved matter must be accompanied by an acknowledgment of indebtedness to their scholarship. A complete recapitulation of their findings is hardly possible within the scope of this study. Indeed, it is hardly necessary, when one considers their conclusions that, far from adopting either a Kantian or a Fichtean system, Carlyle had these two philosophers to thank only for certain meaningful suggestions which he readapted out of their original context. In handling any philosophical ideas, Carlyle always made full use of "poetic License".

Wherever Carlyle refers to Kant, it is in quite simple terms of gratitude to him for vanquishing materialism, for "deliverance from the fatal incubus of Scotch or French

1. P. 198.

2. Margaret Storrs, The Relation of Carlyle to Kant and Fichte, Bryn Mawr, Pa., 1929.

philosophy, with its mechanisms and Atheisms".¹ To Espinasse, he confessed simply that "Kant taught me that I had a soul as well as a body".² Again, in the lectures, he declared, "I began with Hume and Diderot, and as long as I was with them I ran at atheism, at blackness, at materialism of all kinds. If I read Kant, I arrived at precisely opposite conclusions, that all the world was spirit, namely,-- that there was nothing material at all anywhere. And the result was what I have stated, that I resolved for my part on having nothing more to do with metaphysics at all".³ The absence of any qualification as to the formidable complexity of the Kantian system, together with the amazing fact that he could praise Kant and disassociate himself with metaphysics in one breath, is quite revealing of the very tenuous cord which connected the sages of Konigsberg and Chelsea.

In contrast to his later praise, it is interesting to observe that in the Life of Schiller (completed early in 1824), written after four years of "living riotously" with the German romantics, he was so dubious of Kant that one suspects him of having had no first-hand knowledge of the philosopher's writings and of reflecting rather the hostile opinion of a commentary, perhaps that of Stewart's history. Goethe, he says, was clear "for allowing the Kantian scheme to 'have its day, as all things have'". He speaks of its "high pretensions" and its abstruse

1. As he expressed it in a revealing letter to two young Edinburgh students who applied to him for a solution to the mystery of existence (Espinasse, op.cit., p.59).
2. Ibid., pp. 220,1.
3. Lectures on Literature, p. 189.

character, but on the other hand, he says, "The philosophy of Kant may bear in it the everlasting gold of truth." He frankly admits his "limited acquaintance with the subject."¹ We find him valourously tackling the Critique of Pure Reason, probably for the first time, only a few weeks before his marriage to Jane Welsh! After reading one hundred and fifty pages, he had to put it aside as inappropriate for the occasion. Nonetheless he states that it had filled him "full of projects for instructing my benighted countrymen on the merits of this sublime system, at some more propitious season."²

The chief merit, in his mind, was its teaching of the ideality of time and space. But this was not expounded until 1829 in the essay on Novalis. Previously to this, in the "State of German Literature", ³ Carlyle had praised the Kantians because they proceeded in a manner opposite to that of the English empiricists. "The Kantist...commences from within, and proceeds outwards: instead of commencing from without, and, with various precautions and hesitations, endeavouring to proceed inwards." The basis of the German philosopher's investigation was the Urwahr, the Primitively True. The Being of God, or Absolute Being, is philosophically prior to all subsidiary being, as known in experience. "God is, nay, alone is, for with like emphasis we cannot say that anything else is." Man's existence is not nearly so certain as God's existence.

1. Life of Schiller, pp.108ff.

2. Froude, i, p.295; Wilson, i, p.429.

3. Essays, i, pp.79-84.

Liberation from empiricism meant for Carlyle the discovery of a philosophical justification for the Christian belief in the unchangeableness of God, who is "infinite, eternal, invisible, the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow".

In "Novalis"¹ readers are told that in German philosophy "it is the fundamental principle to deny the existence of Matter". However disinclined to probe into metaphysics, Carlyle had possessed enough philosophical insight to recognize that philosophy had abdicated from its enterprise in the thought of Reid and the "Common-sense school". The materiality of matter was not to be received as philosophically proved by the fact that every ordinary person assumes it. A passing reference is made to Berkeley, and, indeed, as Harrold points out,² there is a similarity in language between Carlyle's literary exposition of idealism and Berkeley's thought. Probably a certain amount of knowledge of Berkeley and Coleridge, some time before his acquaintance with the German writers, had kindled his hope for finding a strong enough lever to hoist himself above the materialists. Transcendentalism was now showing him the possibility of "ascending beyond the senses" in the search for truth. What this meant was expounded thus: "To a Transcendentalist, Matter has an existence, but only as a Phenomenon: were we not there, neither would it be there: it is a mere Relation, or rather the result of a Relation between our living Souls and the great First Cause; and depends for its apparent

1. Essays, 11, pp. 23-7.

2. Op.cit., pp. 96-8.

qualities on our bodily and mental organs; having itself no intrinsic qualities; being, in the common sense of that word, Nothing".

This statement would have been unacceptable to Kant himself. His Critique of Pure Reason undertakes to demonstrate not the nothingness of phenomena, but that they cannot be known as things in themselves. Kant taught that the world is dualistic with appearances on one side, which call for the analysis of speculative reason, and things in themselves, which are spiritual and cannot be known. It is the practical reason which forms ideas of the latter. Things in themselves cannot be known, Kant said, because there is no experience of them. However, God, freedom, and immortality must be imputed by the practical reason in its perception of the one knowable thing in itself, the moral imperative, or sense of obligation. Thus did Kant base his religious belief on the moral nature of man. He carried it away from phenomena into the realm of spiritual things where the practical reason had insight. Carlyle, after reading Kant, used the term "reason" when referring to the moral and spiritual intuitions of the soul. It must not be confused with Kant's "pure reason". In his first critique, the German philosopher analyzed space and time as the forms of the mind by which we receive representations of the outside world. Space and time become two windows of the mind, objective in the sense of being the necessary condition of perception, but without objectivity in the external world. This concept played a great

part in forming Carlyle's idea of the relativity of the spacio-temporal world as contrasted to the eternities, God and the human soul. In the first critique, Kant also describes the categories, which are the forms of the Understanding, that faculty of the mind which makes synthetic a priori judgments of the phenomena represented. These categories--substance, cause and effect, etc.,--are necessary conditions of knowledge, and Kant proves their use in all minds, in order to make valid the claim of science to universal truth--a claim which Hume's philosophy of loose and separate sensations had threatened.

In all this, it is clear that Kant is not open to the charge of subjective idealism; Berkeley, who was familiar to Carlyle from early days, was more of a subjective idealist than Kant. The latter was concerned to demonstrate the reliability of the phenomenal world; indeed the phenomenal world could not even exist without the noumenal world, as it were, to "back it up". Things in themselves may be posited only by a kind of "metaphysical faith", it is true, but they are quite objective. Carlyle misinterpreted Kant in thinking he had proved the "nothingness" of things outside the human mind.

In his formulation of a conception of the ideality of time and space, Carlyle did two things. On the one hand, he went beyond Kant in asserting their absolute ideality. On the other hand, he simply reasserted their created nature in Christian terms. If between these two ways of speaking, there was any contradiction, Carlyle was not troubled by it. Regarding the

first, we may say that Carlyle was reacting immoderately from empiricism in exaggerating the ephemeral character of the phenomenal world. Like the "garment" image, another figure of speech had made a profound impression on his mind: Shakespeare's lines from The Tempest:

We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

As an eleven year old boy he had seen these words inscribed on a bust of Shakespeare among the wares of an image-seller in Ecclefechan.¹ They confirmed, in a poetic simile, what, at home and in the kirk, he was constantly hearing of life's brevity, its comparative unreality to the glories of the future life with God. When he came to read Richter, he was delighted to discover that the same lines had made a similarly profound impression on him; Richter declared they had created whole books in him.²

Kant seemed to Carlyle to be supporting this dream-like character of life. The qualified unreality of time and space in Kantian thought was rendered by Carlyle into an absolute unreality. "But the same Where", he writes in Sartor, "with its brother, When, are from the first the master-colours of our Dream-grotto; say rather, the Canvas (the warp and woof thereof) whereon all our Dreams and Life-visions are painted. Nevertheless, has not a deeper meditation taught certain of every climate and age, that the Where and When, so mysteriously inseparable from all our Thoughts, are but superficial terrestrial adhesions to thought;

1. Allingham, op.cit., p. 247.

2. Essays, ii, p.154.

that the Seer may discern them where they mount up out of the celestial Everywhere and Forever: have not all nations conceived their God as Omnipresent and Eternal; as existing in a universal Here, an everlasting Now? Think well, thou too wilt find that Space is but a mode of our human Sense, so likewise Time; there is no Space and no Time: We are--we know not what;--light-sparkles floating in the aether of Deity.

"So that this so solid-seeming World, after all, were but an air-image, our Me the only reality: and Nature, with its thousandfold production and destruction, but the reflex of our own inward Force, the 'phantasy of our Dream'; or what the Earth-Spirit in Faust names it, the living visible Garment of God"¹. "Thus", comments Harrold, "agreeing with Kant that space and time are ideal, that they have no absolute reality, Carlyle goes further and denies them any reality whatsoever. Moreover, if they are unreal, then Eternity and Infinity are the only realities"²

The second aspect of his thought about time and space is more closely related to the Christian doctrine of creation. Evidently the young Carlyle had been troubled by the theological puzzle of how to reconcile the idea of God as eternal and omnipresent with the spacio-temporal world. Kant's undermining of the absolute existence of time and space now suggested the solution, removing "a stumbling-block from the very threshold

1. Sartor, pp. 42,3.

2. Op.cit., p. 93.

of our Theology. For on this ground, when we say that the Deity is omnipresent and eternal, that with Him it is a universal Here and Now, we say nothing wonderful; nothing but that He also created Time and Space, that Time and Space are not laws of His being, but only of ours".¹

This two-sided character of his conception of time and space, their ideality and their created nature, explains the double strain in Carlyle's view of the world and life: its dream-like quality, on one hand, and its factual existence, on the other. In his younger days, under the influence of idealistic philosophy, the first was emphasized; in his later days, the second. As he grew older, and became preoccupied with history, Carlyle more and more returned to the view of the world as veritably real, and no dream. The particularity of "facts" lays hold on his mind in a manner quite alien to the mental habits of an idealist philosopher concerned with universals. It is really the Biblical attitude toward the created world as objectively real which wins out in the end in Carlyle's mind, over the Platonic preoccupation with universal ideas. "Facts" are basic, because they are the stuff of the actual world where the providence of God is being worked out in the very real drama of human striving and divine judgment.

Carlyle's idealist side was really more influenced by Fichte's absolute idealism than by Kant. "The speculative basis of Carlyle's universe", says Harrold, "so far as he ever

1. "Novalis", Essays, ii, p.26.

accepted one, is to be found in a few passages of Fichte's Nature of the Scholar" The first Lecture is quoted: "The whole material world, with all its adaptations and ends, and in particular the life of man in this world, are by no means, in themselves and in deed and truth, that which they seem to be to the uncultivated and natural sense of man; but there is something higher, which lies concealed behind all natural appearance. This concealed foundation of all appearance may, in its greatest universality, be aptly named the Divine Idea". The passage which was more memorable for Carlyle follows: "Thus I can suppose...some Finished Scholar according to appearance, under whose eye, perhaps, these thoughts may come--approaching them, and, puzzled and doubtful, at last thoughtfully exclaiming:--The Idea--the Divine Idea,--that which lies at the bottom of all appearance,--what may this mean?"¹ By no means did Carlyle grasp the full implications of Fichte's absolute idealism. The impersonal nature of Fichte's God--if it be a God--did not impress him. What did interest him was the symbolic character which was given to the world, as the manifestation of the Divine Idea. "According to Fichte", he wrote in 1827, "there is a 'Divine Idea' pervading the visible Universe; which visible Universe is indeed but its symbol and sensible manifestation, having itself no meaning, or even true existence independent of it."² Carlyle took nothing from Fichte's idea of the Ich and Nicht-Ich but a misinterpretation of it, as Storrs³ points out. He was not interested enough to

1. Harrold, op.cit., pp. 82,3.

2. "The State of German Literature", Essays, i, p.58.

3. Op.cit., p.67.

determine exactly what Fichte meant in positing the world of nature as the Divine Ego's consciousness of itself. It is true that, in at least one place, he uses Fichtean language in calling nature "the realized Thought of God",¹ but he penetrates no further into the abstractions involved in this. He is concerned only with the consistently revelatory quality of the universe, its dynamic character, as opposed to "dead" matter, its function as the channel through which the "Primitively True" reaches the poet and the prophet who become hero-revealers of the same to humanity. As we shall see, Fichte's teaching of the priesthood of literary men, and Carlyle's adoption of it, stems directly from this conception of the Divine Idea manifesting itself in the world.

The real contribution of Fichte's thought consisted in a kind of revivification of the material world, so that it could be seen as the garment of God, a "'continuous revelation' of the Godlike in the Terrestrial and the Common".² "Nature is no longer dead, hostile Matter, but the veil and mysterious Garment of the Unseen; as it were, the Voice with which the Deity proclaims himself to man."³

Apart from its autobiographical interest, Sartor's significance lies in its elucidation of Carlyle's symbolism, his "natural supernaturalism". Although his frequent references

1. Heroes, p.80.

2. Ibid., p.163.

3. "Novalis", Essays, ii, p.29.

to Reality versus Appearances, and Reason versus Understanding (the two "instruments" of knowledge employed in perceiving them) might lead us to see a sharp dualism in his world-view, Carlyle is fundamentally monistic. He has much to say, not only of the unity of society, of history, but also of nature. The rationalist Cartesian split between mind and matter, which led in European philosophy to the flights of idealism on one hand and the depths of materialism on the other, is fundamentally alien to Carlyle's constant assertion of the oneness of the Ideal and the Actual. His text is announced: "Nature is one, a living and indivisible whole".¹ It is elaborated in countless ways, always poetically. The universe, he says, in The French Revolution, is a "thousand-tinted Flame-image, at once veil and revelation, of One Unnameable, dwelling in inaccessible light".²

The metaphor of clothes is the literary device used in Sartor, because it lends itself easily to every aspect of spirit actualized in reality. Just as the universe is the garment of God, so are the concretions of human society the clothes of the human spirit, the dress in which it appears. The theme is played upon brilliantly, in a manner worthy of the vocation of the great poets, whose peculiar milieu is the symbolic.

Carlyle's definition of a symbol is that which at the same time conceals and reveals. It is silence and speech acting together, veil and revelation in union, like the parables of Jesus, who understood so well the peculiar adaptation of the

1. Sartor, p.223.

2. Vol. ii, p. 103.

symbol to the free choice of men. Symbols unite the Infinite with the finite: indeed, "the Universe is but one vast Symbol of God",¹ and man himself is a symbol of God,² by which Carlyle means something not far distant from the Christian doctrine of the imago dei. Fantasy, or poetic imagery, is the means by which the symbolic is brought home to men. It is a manner of comprehension and communication far above the dull level of logical inquiry, of the Understanding. Carlyle will not allow his conception of the symbol to be confined; he applies it equally to the "stupidest heraldic Coats-of arms" and the Christian religion. "Through all these glimmers something of a Divine Idea"³ The highest symbols are unique men. The highest of these is "Jesus of Nazareth, and his Life, and his Biography, and what followed therefrom. Higher has the human Thought not yet reached: this is Christianity and Christendom; a Symbol of quite perennial, infinite character; whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest".⁴ Harrold comments that "Carlyle took Goethe's figure of the Garment more literally than did Goethe, and made it a philosophical tenet. Though he never developed the idea of symbolism in any detail, it conditioned his whole Weltanschauung, and determined much of his attitude toward history, society, political theory, and ethics".⁵

1. Sartor, p. 175.

2. In the French Revolution (ii, p.47), he declares that man's whole life is a symbolical representation of the celestial, invisible force that is in him.

3. Sartor, p. 177.

4. Ibid., pp. 178,9.

5. Op.cit., pp. 107,8.

If Carlyle can be said to have had a doctrine of revelation, it was in this of the symbolic, expressed in Goethean terms of the "open secret". "Wonderful universe!" he exclaims, "Were our eyes but opened, what a 'secret' were it that we daily see and handle without heed!"¹ In contrast to deism, Carlyle stresses the immanence of the divine spirit, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet". The heroes of the past are those who have penetrated "into the sacred mystery of the Universe; what Goethe calls 'the open secret'...open to all, seen by almost none! That divine mystery, which lies everywhere in all Beings, 'the Divine Idea of the World, that which lies at the bottom of Appearance', as Fichte styles it: of which all Appearance, from the starry sky to the grass of the field, but especially the Appearance of Man and his work, is but the vesture, the embodiment that renders it visible."² It was a very adaptable idea. As late as 1850, he is defining the 'open secret' as "the divine sense of right and wrong".³

These three passages, written in 1829, 1840, and 1850, respectively, using the same Goethean term, "open secret", each with a different meaning, show in an illuminating way the gradual course of Carlyle's changing mind in viewing his universe. At first, the thrilling reality of the world is open to him, in the unconfined terms of wonder, as to a mystic. In the second, the open secret has become the ~~sensitivity~~ sensitivity of the heroic genius to the meaning of existence (no different than in 1829, but now

1. Two Notebooks, p. 142.
2. Heroes, p. 80.
3. Latter-day Pamphlets, p. 334.

drawn down into the hero). And, at last, it is simply the moral conscience. It represents a declining from the mystic's vision of God to the moralist's rather barren repetition of the duty of man. We cannot but observe, to continue the metaphor, that Carlyle's universe was much more "open" in his younger days than later.

Carlyle, especially in these younger days, felt it his mission to reacquaint men with the miraculous character of life, to show them the permanence of the supernatural in the natural.¹ "That seeking for a God there and not here begins to get wearisome".² Goethe's enigmatic story "The Tale" he expounds as an artistic attempt "to get a free solid communication established over this same wondrous River of Time, so that the Natural and the Supernatural may stand in friendliest neighborhood and union".³ "The age of miracles, as it ever was, now is", was the "high Gospel" proclaimed in "Characteristics". Carlyle, never before or after, in this writer's opinion, reached the height attained by the prose-poetry of Sartor's chapter, "Natural Supernaturalism" with its eloquent exaltation of wonder over the supernatural character of life. Carlyle himself called this the promised land of Transcendentalism, a Palingenesia, or re-birth into a region where one views life and the universe

1. In his journal, he gives expression to this reflection. "The world grows to me even more as a magic picture--a true supernatural revelation, infinitely stern, but also infinitely grand. Shall I ever succeed in copying a little of 'the fearfulness and wonderfulness' of life, haunts me and grows upon me". (Froude, ii, pp.231, 283).
2. Heroes, p. 91.
3. Essays, ii, p. 450.

from a transcendent perspective. Its first achievement is the transcending of the dull attitude sans wonder by which all natural occurrences occasion no surprise, because they are assumed to be the necessary product of perfectly comprehensible natural laws. Carlyle does not deny the operation of natural laws, but he emphatically denies their comprehensibility by the human mind, and launches out into the language of his favorite Job, inquiring of prosaic "scientific individuals" if they had "dived down to the foundations of the Universe, and gauged everything there". He does not inveigh against science, but against science minus wonder. "To the wisest man, wide as in his vision, Nature remains of quite infinite depth". Man he compares to a minnow in a creek, effected by but not comprehending ocean tides and trade winds. "Such a minnow is Man; his Creek this Planet Earth; his Ocean the immeasurable All; his Monsoons and periodic Currents the mysterious Course of Providence through Aeons of Aeons".

From such a transcendent viewpoint, everything is seen as miraculous. "Were it not miraculous", he asks, "could I stretch forth my hand and therewith clutch many a thing, and swing it hither and thither. Art thou a grown baby, then, to fancy that the Miracle lies in miles of distance, or in pounds avoirdupois of weight; and not to see that the true inexplicable God-revealing Miracle lies in this, that I can stretch forth my hand at all; that I have free Force to clutch aught therewith?" It is only the illusion of custom which robs us of wonder.

"The deepest of all illusory Appearances", he goes on, "for hiding wonder...are your two grand fundamental world-enveloping Appearances, Space and Time". Here we see Carlyle's own highly individualistic interpretation of the relativity of time and space. He appeals to man's mysterious independence of present time through memory of the past and hope of the future, and compares these to Fortunatus' hat which annihilated space and to man's equally miraculous capacity to transcend time. This stature of the spirit, towering over the conditions of temporality evoked Carlyle's wonder as it always has the poets, from Shakespeare, who called man's capacity to look "before and after" his "godlike reason",¹ to T. S. Eliot.

To be conscious is not to be in time...
 ...the end and the beginning were always there
 Before the beginning and after the end,
 And all is always now".²

"Pierce through the Time-element", Carlyle cries, "glance into the Eternal. Believe what thou findest written in the sanctuaries of Man's Soul, even as all Thinkers, in all ages, have devoutly read it there: that Time and Space are not God, but creations of God; that with God as it is a universal Here, so is it an everlasting Now". The chapter ends with a passage on the illusory character of human life, comparing men to ghosts who flit momentarily across the stage of earth--"till the scent of the morning air summons us to our still Home; and dreamy night becomes awake and Day". The last words of the chapter are the lines^{of} The Tempest which we have already quoted.

1. Hamlet, IV, iv.

2. Burnt Norton.

The noteworthy thing about Carlyle's transcendentalism is that it was nicely balanced with practical realism. It did not carry him into the extravagances of Emerson, who hardly gained Carlyle's sympathetic ear for Swedenborgianism, though he tried! Carlyle felt "encompassed by the Godhead" as he wrote of Novalis,¹ but he was not carried away by mystic exaltation from the actual world. Whatever he says about "illusory appearances", he maintained his grasp upon the oneness of the ideal and the actual, sufficiently to render him ineligible to be called a mystic in the true sense. Reflecting Schelling's emphasis upon "die Einheit des Realen und Idealen", Carlyle preached action as opposed to mystic contemplation, and work as the "discerning of the Infinite in the Finite, of the Ideal made Real". He is indeed quite severe in his judgment upon Emerson's transcendentalism. He appeals to him to come down from "the eternal mountaintops...; come down, and you shall do life-pictures, passions, facts".² The check upon Carlyle which made him tremendously powerful as a religious interpreter of history and an ethical teacher of his own age, did not restrain the New England transcendentalist.

Carlyle viewed his supernaturalism as a much needed mission to check the prevailing tendency of his time to live by logic. "This is not a religious age", he lamented in "Signs of the Times", "Wonder indeed is on all hands dying".³

1. Essays, ii, p.28.

2. Correspondence, ii, p. 81.

3. Essays, ii, p. 74.

In the constantly reiterated antithesis between logic and reason, Carlyle asserted his theory of knowledge, which we shall see to be complementary to his world-view of Reality behind Appearances, or, in the Fichtean phrase more congenial to him, "the Divine Idea at the bottom of appearances". We need not look for a neat epistemology in Carlyle, for he is no philosopher. Nonetheless, we find nothing clearer in all his writings than his setting opposite to one another two forms of knowing. There is a fluidity in the use of the terms of this antithesis. On one side, he speaks of "logic" the faculty of the "Understanding", "argument", etc., as having to do with the hardly more than mensurative perceptions of "appearances" and their relations. On the other, the words used are "Reason", "belief", "intuition", "faith", "meditation", "conscience", etc., as the organs of knowledge for the apprehension of Reality, or the Divine Idea, or God. In either case, the terms are practically synonymous. In disparaging the former and exalting the latter, Carlyle placed himself squarely in the stream of the anti-intellectualist romantic reaction to the "age of reason".

It will be recalled that Carlyle had in his youth tried to validate the sufficiency of logic to discover all truths. He later disavowed this mistaken enterprise and with characteristic extravagance leaped to a romantic scouting of all the sober processes of the intellect, telling men to be "silent" when it was really their duty to think. In the 1838 lectures, he declares that he does not find "more than one single object

taken in my logic entirely, and that is Euclid's Elements". Logic, he says, "can do no more than define to others what it is you believe". This is amusing, because Carlyle never used logic to define his belief: his contemporaries were often dissatisfied that he should always proclaim, never explain.¹ He does candidly confess, though not as a defect, that "in spite of early training, I never do see sorites of logic hanging together, put in regular order, but I conclude that it is going to end in some niaiserie, in some miserable delusion".²

In his reflective novel 'Wotton Reinfred', Carlyle had used the character of Dalbrook (whose intellectual features suggest that Coleridge may have been his model)³ as the mouthpiece for his earliest ruminations. For the benefit of his sceptical

1. In a second-hand book, the writer discovered in MS. these humorous verses by the famous hymn-writer, Horatius Bonar (1808-89):

"There's Tammas the Ercildoune prophet,
 Him Tammas the Rhymer they ca'
 Tammas Boston, the true Ettrick Shepherd,
 Tammas Chalmers, the greatest of a'.
 There are Tammases clever and stupid,
 There are Tammases great and sma',
 There are Tammases no very canny,
 But here is the queerest of a!.
 He's Tammas of Ecclefechan,
 An' he's no like the rest ava'
 He's aye gruntin' an' growlin',
 Or greetin' an' yowlin',
 Or flytin' an' bytin',
 Or moanin' an' groanin'.
 An' what he's believin', in
 Earth or in Heaven,
 Naebody kens ava!".

(greetin': tearful;
 yowlin' : wailing.
 flytin' : scolding,
 bytin' : bidding). ?

2. Lectures on Literature, p. 153.
3. See H.S. Johnson, Thomas Carlyle, 1814-1831, New Haven, 1911, pp. 14, 15, 30.

friends, Dalbrook sets out three forms of truth: the truth of the market-place, the truth of the laboratory, and the truth of the soul. "The first two are of things seen and their relations, they are practical or physically scientific, and belong to the understanding... Laplace's Mécanique Celeste, Adam Smith's Wealth of Nations are full of understanding,... but of reason there is hardly any trace in either... Understanding perceives and judges of images and measures of things;.. reason perceives and judges of what has no measure or image. The latter only is unchangeable and everlasting in its decisions, the results of the former change from age to age...these comparatively are not worth the name of truth, they are not truth, but only ephemeral garments of truth".¹

One is reminded here of a striking parallel in the thought of Pascal, whose Pensées may possibly have exerted some unconscious influence upon Carlyle's early attempts to free himself from rationalism. Pascal divides reality into three orders, the order of matter, the order of minds, and the order of charity, and distinguishes them so clearly that he experiences no conflict between his mathematical pursuits and his religious beliefs.²

1. Wotton, pp. 61,2.

2. He declares in Fragment 793 of the Pensees, "All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms, are not equal in value to the lowest mind; for mind knows all these and itself too; and these bodies know nothing.

All bodies together, and all minds together, and all their productions, are not equal in value to the least feeling of charity. This is of an order infinitely more exalted.

From all bodies together, one cannot draw forth one tiny thought; that is impossible, and of another order. From all bodies and minds, one cannot draw forth a feeling of true charity; that is impossible, and of another order supernatural".

(Quoted by Cailliet, op.cit., pp.31,2).

Carlyle's truths of the market-place and the laboratory may be said to be of the Pascalian orders of matter and mind, and are arrived at by purely rational inquiry, while his "truth of the soul" embracing as it does the moral sense (the special locus of divine immanence) is certainly akin to Pascal's supernatural order of charity.

The critical essays give abundant evidence of what Carlyle thought of the different functions of the understanding and the reason. Perhaps the fullest exposition is given in the "State of German Literature". "Both Understanding and Reason are organs, or rather we should say, modes of operation, by which the mind discovers truth; but....their manner of proceeding is essentially different;... their provinces are separable and distinguishable,...it is of the last importance to separate and distinguish them...Understanding discerns only relations, and cannot decide without if. The proper province of Understanding is all, strictly speaking, real practical and material knowledge, Mathematics, Physics, Political Economy, the adaptation of means to ends in the whole business of life. In this province it is the strength and universal implement of the mind: an indispensable servant...Let it not step beyond this province, however; not usurp the province of Reason, which it is appointed to obey, and cannot rule without ruin to the whole spiritual man. Should Understanding (step beyond this province), it ends...in Atheism, or a faint possible Theism...in Utility... (in) everlasting paradoxes on Necessity and the Freedom of the Will; (in) ominous

silence on the end and meaning of man, and the enigma which, under such inspection, the whole purport of existence becomes... The French are of all European nations the most gifted with Understanding, and the most destitute of Reason. "

Writing of Novalis, Carlyle has this further to say of Understanding and Reason. "If it be, as Kant maintains, that the logical mechanism of the mind is arbitrary, so to speak, and might have been made different, it will follow, that all inductive conclusions, all conclusions of the Understanding, have only a relative truth, are true only for us, and if some other thing be true.

"Thus far Hume and Kant go together...but...all Poetry, Virtue, Religion (are) things which are properly beyond the province of the Understanding, of which the Understanding can take no cognizance, except a false one. The elder Jacobi, who indeed is no Kantist, says once, we remember: 'It is the instinct of Understanding to contradict Reason'.The aim of Novalis' whole philosophy...is to preach and establish the majesty of Reason...to...reduce its vassal, Understanding, into fealty, the right and useful relation for it..."

In his close analysis of these excerpts from Wotton and the essays, Harrold shows their "unKantian" nature. He points out that Kant regarded the Understanding, as the organ producing conceptual forms, as universal and unchanging (thus validating science, after Hume's scepticism), and that he refused to

interpret the world of phenomena as mere illusion.¹ Actually, it would appear that Carlyle's discrimination between the two ways of knowing nearly duplicates Coleridge, who wrote in Aids to Reflection, "Reason is pre-eminently spiritual, and a spirit, even our spirit, through an effulgence of the same grace by which we are privileged to say, Our Father!

"On the other hand, the judgments of the Understanding are binding only in relation to the objects of our senses...as Leighton rightly defines it, 'the faculty of judging according to sense'....There neither is nor can be but one reason, one and the same; even the light that lighteth every man's individual understanding (discursus) and thus maketh it a reasonable understanding, discourse of reason...."²

Carlyle's famous disparagement of Coleridge from his interview at Highgate in 1824 to his writing of the Life of Sterling, in which he sarcastically describes Coleridge's philosophy as a "thrice-refined pabulum of transcendental moonshine",³ is deceptive, if used as evidence to disprove any influence upon Carlyle's formulation of the distinction between reason and understanding. As always, Carlyle judged thinkers by their personal character. In Past and Present, he tells us that idleness had made Coleridge's a life-in-death.⁴ He further

1. The quotations given are as selected by Harrold. See his complete exegesis and comparison with Kant, op.cit., pp. 129-34.

2. As quoted by Harrold, ibid., p. 124.

3. Chapter viii.

4. P.285. Sanders attributes Carlyle's attitude to jealousy, and says that Carlyle wanted to have the major credit for bringing German literature and philosophy to England, but this is obviously unfair (Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement, Duke University Press, 1942, chap.vi, "Thomas Carlyle", pp. 147-78).

objected to Coleridge's attempt to present an apologetic for orthodox Christianity in new idealist terms. All this conceals what influence Coleridge did have upon him even before his introduction to German thought. In the Reminiscences, Carlyle declares that Coleridge had taught that the Puritan divines were the genuine exemplars of an earnest style;¹ doubtless their teaching, as well as the manner of it, impressed him, for he never speaks of Hooker, for example, without great admiration.² In the essay on Voltaire, Carlyle had declared, "Our fathers were wiser than we, when they said in deepest earnestness, what we often hear in shallow mockery, that Religion is 'not of Sense, but of Faith'; not of Understanding, but of Reason".³ Perhaps, as Harrold indicates,⁴ the observation made by Dugald Stewart that Cudworth and the Cambridge Platonists, in their transcendental view of reason, had anticipated Kant, had impressed Carlyle. Certainly everything he says about reason seems to reflect the thought of Hooker on the subject, based upon the words of St. John, "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world".⁵

"Understanding", wrote Carlyle in his journal, "is to Reason as the talent of a Beaver (which can build houses and uses its tail for a trowel) to the genius of a Prophet and a Poet".⁶ And this reason always meant moral sensitivity to Carlyle. After

1. ii, p. 41.

2. Cf. essay "Signs of the Times" and Wilson, ii, p.12.

3. Essays, i, pp. 457,8.

4. Op.cit., p. 281.

5. Ibid. p. 123.

6. Two Notebooks, p. 142.

the period of the critical writing, he had less and less to say about the distance between the methods of knowledge and only emphasized the identity of intelligence with moral insight, as in the Latter-Day Pamphlets,¹ in which he inveighs against stupidity as a cause of evil and holds up intelligence as its cure.

In summarizing the component parts of Carlyle's Weltanschauung, we recall the unsystematic character of his mind, and the appeal which German romanticism made to him as a release from the incubus of mechanism and materialism. The influence of mechanism upon the theology of deism and Paley's teleology made them of no religious value to Carlyle, who, like Kierkegaard, wanted something better than a "proveable" God. Infinitely preferable to the remote Architect-god was the immanent Divine Spirit, clothed in the garment of nature. Carlyle welcomed Goethe's pantheism as the corrective of deism, but he avoided making a creed of it; indeed he could not, for the Christian doctrines of creation and divine transcendence over nature had too strongly influenced him. The idealistic philosophers of Germany, Kant and Fichte, were welcomed simply because they offered an explanation and expression of man's religious and moral nature. Carlyle was not interested in the details of their metaphysics, but remained content with their broad concept of the true reality of the Invisible, and the comparative unreality of the phenomenal world. In a highly original manner, he thought

1. See pp. 105, 106, 108, 113.

of the Kantian philosophy as supporting the dream-like character of existence. To him, it was the philosophical expression of the Calvinistic view of the world as a "vain show" and God as alone real. Time and space are only "superficial adhesions to thought". At the same time, Carlyle does not lose himself in a Platonic world of forms and universals. As the Christian doctrine of creation served as a corrective of pantheism, so also did it rivet his attention more and more upon reality, upon the facts of history as the area in which God acts and is perceived.

Fichte's Divine Idea manifesting itself in appearances appealed to Carlyle's appreciation of the symbolic character of life and history. The material world was revived. Fichte helped to prepare him for the role of an interpreter of history as the theatre for the symbolic drama of God's righteousness. The idea of "natural supernaturalism" was the means Carlyle used to present a new concept of the miraculous. Everything is miraculous because everything is God's. This spiritualization of all existence, instead of placing him among the mystics, made him a religious realist, ever alive to die Einheit des Realen und Idealen. Although in the epistemological dualism between the understanding and the reason, Carlyle, in his earlier days, seemed to be contradicting the monism of his "natural supernaturalism", he at length put aside the distinction in favor of a practical religious realism. We shall, in our last chapter, note that the rather mystical elevation of the reason does not survive beyond the early period. This becomes understandable as we turn now to a consideration of Carlyle's position as a religious

historian-artist using the raw material of "real life" to reveal the highest reality of divine righteousness.

CHAPTER SEVEN.

CARLYLE'S PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY.

"Of all Bibles, the frightfullest to disbelieve in is this 'Bible of Universal History'".
 (Past and Present, p.240.)

Carlyle as a historian is in a sense central to our study, because it was in history that he found the principal medium for his religious thought. While it is true that Sartor and the early essays explicate Carlyle's religious thought so far as his own form of transcendentalism is concerned, his historical works, The French Revolution, Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches, and the History of Friedrich II of Prussia, are the actual illustrations he gives us of the revelation of God active in history. They were undertaken not to provide libraries and private shelves with new information, but from predominantly religious motives--The French Revolution to show the awful, divine judgment of blind chaotic revolt visited upon luxurious, irresponsible rulers, "Cromwell" to show the nearest thing Carlyle could find in history to theocratic rule, "Fred-erick" as a biographical tribute to the last effective hero-king in modern history.

We shall find a philosophy of history in Carlyle, but not one that is either very conscious or abstract. It only emerges from the nature of his highly interpretative treatment of historical phenomena, rather than as a carefully prepared framework into which events are made to fit. It is really more a theology of history, so much concerned is Carlyle to delineate

the operations of divine judgment, to describe the field of revelation where we see God's laws most clearly. His theological and existential approach to history forever renders him the opponent of so-called "scientific historians", with whose claim to ability to present facts impartially he would have had little sympathy. In his second essay on history, Carlyle distinguishes between the Artist in history and the Artisan in history. Here is the comparison between the historian who comprehends an Idea of the Whole (i.e., the unity of all the past with all the present and the spiritual reality thus embodied), and the mere day-laborer scholar who digs in his own little ditch, throwing up facts without caring or having the capacity to look up to the skies which overarch all ditches and hold them in mysterious unity.

Carlyle gave the name "Dry-as-dust" to the Artisan in history and applied it frequently to the visionless writers of the innumerable volumes of memoirs and accumulations of facts which he found it painfully necessary to explore before he could do his own interpretative work. However, impatient as he appeared with the drones of historical scholarship, he reluctantly admitted their limited worth; indeed, with the editing of Cromwell's letters and speeches he himself was forced to become a drone, accumulating a great deal of bee's wax with the honey; but for the interspersal of his own interpretation, he would have become another "Dry-as-dust" to future historians. Nevertheless, in accurately perceiving the limitations of the Artisan, he foresaw the predicament of a century of "scientific

history" writing. If the mere accumulation of facts is to be regarded as history, of necessity the task gets quickly out of hand, and the "scientific historian" finding it necessary to train a microscope on some very, very small segment of the circle of historical existence, is likely to forget about the circle itself. Writing in 1830, Carlyle prays that in the writing of history "increased division of labour do not here, as elsewhere, aggravate our already strong mechanical tendencies, so that in the manual dexterity for parts we lose all command of the whole".¹ One hundred and four years later, in 1934, Arnold Toynbee looks back to see that what Carlyle feared has actually happened. He cites the career of Theodore Mommsen as typical-- a historian who, beginning with a monumental work, The History of the Roman Republic, abandons the larger view to peer into his microscope, thenceforth producing "an exhaustive publication of Latin inscriptions and the encyclopedic presentation of Roman Constitutional Law". This, Professor Toynbee says, is one of the "monuments of the laboriousness, the 'factual' knowledge, the mechanical skill, and the organizing power of our society. They will take their rank with our stupendous tunnels and bridges and dams and liners and battleships and skyscrapers, and their editors will be remembered among the famous Western engineers. In invading the realm of historical thought, the Industrial System² has given scope to great strategists and has set up marvellous trophies of victory. Yet, in a detached onlooker's

1. "On History", Essays, ii, p.95.

2. Through its division of labor.

mind, the doubt arises whether this conquest may not, after all, be a tour de force and the confidence of victory the delusion of a false analogy".¹ What is needed now, at this late date, is the brave attempt at universal history.

Carlyle did not write universal history as it is ordinarily conceived, covering the whole space and time of the recorded life of man, but he did write religious and didactic history, which is universal history of another order. He was pre-eminently concerned with the moral and spiritual situation of man and his relation to God. He would have condemned unreservedly history confined to man as "a tool-using animal".² It is true that he was fascinated by the inventions that were changing the face of the earth after the first half-century of the industrial revolution, and contemplated writing a history of them,³ but this was in connection with his doctrine of work, the spiritual nature of which we have seen. It was man as a believing spirit which demanded his

1. Arnold J. Toynbee, A Study of History, Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., 3rd impression, 1945, vol. i, pp.3,4.
2. Professor Gordon Childe, in What Happened in History (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, reprint of 1946), typifies this type of materialism in historical writing. "As with other animals, it is chiefly through his equipment that man acts on and reacts to the external world..." This equipment "may be summed up in two words, hands and brains". The usefulness of "brains" is also seen predominantly in the sense of a tool unique only because reason can operate in preparatory detachment from physical matter: an engineer can blueprint a structure, a distinct advance upon the haphazard piling up of stones! Professor Childe explains religion as a contributing factor to "the biological and economic prosperity" of a society, thus interpreting even the highest activity of the human spirit as a tool for physical survival. Here his materialist philosophy induces him to be treasonous to the historian's loyalty to facts. He must simply hang a curtain in front of the fact that all higher religions have strong elements of self-surrender, self-sacrifice, asceticism, "other-worldliness", mystic self-annihilation, Buddhist elimination of desire and yearning for Nirvana. This is a fact he must remain blind to: thus he loses his intelligibility as a historian. (See pp.7-15)
3. See "On History", Essays, ii, p.95.

attention, so much so that he often spoke of the sceptical periods of human history as unworthy of the labor of historical investigation. Carlyle's history was universal in the sense that the universal moral situation of all men was made to shine out clearly through the particular moral situations of individual men. There is hardly a page of his historical books that is not a sermon, with history as the text.

History became a kind of Bible to him. It was a compensation for the loss of the Scriptures, the verbal inspiration of which he had been forced to disbelieve, before historical criticism had dawned upon England, offering a new and intelligible approach to the Bible. But the strong Biblicism of Calvinism, the conception of revelation as something given, something concrete and plainly set forth in a Book for every reader to comprehend by the aid of the Holy Spirit, had done its work and had given Carlyle's mind a bent toward the tangible expression of religion. He maintained a literalist mentality, with the Book ("the terrible Hebrew veracity of every line of it")¹ replaced by the facts of history. These facts were lighted up with divine significance like the letters of illuminated manuscripts. They declared the reality of God with the authority that the Bible once possessed. "All History", he wrote in Frederick, is "an imprisoned Psalm and Prophecy". It is the historian's task to disimprison it.²

1. Frederick, i, p.18.

2. Ibid., p. 17.

This "Biblical" proclivity toward a given, literal revelation though instilled by the religion of his home, was directed toward history by many seminal suggestions of the German writers, who, of course, were themselves inheritors of the Biblical emphasis of the Reformation. We recall the important passage in Wilhelm Meister in which Goethe asserts that the spirit of "Ethnic religion" ("reverence for what is above us") "is to be sought for in the history of the world; its outward form in the events of that history".¹ Reading Richter's Wahrheit aus Jean Pauls Leben, Carlyle found a similar point of view which he quoted in a note in his second essay on Richter. History "has highest value, in as far as we, by means of it, as by means of Nature, can divine and read the Infinite Spirit, who, with Nature and History, as with letters, legibly writes to us. He who finds a God in the physical world will also find one in the moral, which is History. Nature forces on our heart a Creator: History a Providence".² Richter called history a third Bible, Nature being the second. "Die Geschichte ist--wenn ihr sie nicht zur Biographie des Teufels machen wollt--die dritte Bibel; denn das Buch der Natur ist die zweite...."³ But perhaps Carlyle's homiletic use of history was planted, or at any rate, watered, by Novalis. Teufelsdröckh proclaims that man's history is "a perpetual Evangel",⁴ and so we may see Carlyle, in theory and practice, echoing a Fragment of Novalis: "Der Historiker muss in Vortrag oft Redner werden. Er tragt ja Evangelium vor, denn die ganze Geschichte ist Evangelium".⁵

1. ii, pp.267-9.

2. "Jean Paul Friedrich Richter Again", Essays, ii, p.113.

3. Levana: oder Erziehlehre, Stuttgart, 1845, p.343, as quoted by Harrold, op.cit., p. 164.

4. Sartor, p. 202.

5. Werke, ed. by Friedemann, Berlin, 1908, vol. iii, p.192, as quoted by Harrold, op.cit., p.293.

It has been tempting for some critics to see in Fichte's philosophy of history more influence upon Carlyle than actually prevailed. Certainly, it is true that Carlyle found the thought of the Divine Idea manifesting itself in historical events a fruitful one, but Fichte's elaborate philosophy of history, with its five periods, based upon a metaphysic of absolute idealism, in which the Divine Ego progressively advances to its own complete realization must have seemed far too abstract. The forcing of historical events into such a system was a dubious enterprise. System-builders like Fichte, "taking the high priori road",¹ were indulging in illusions of omniscience in the face of a very mysterious universe. The doctrine of Providence, which stresses the activity of a transcendent God in history informed Carlyle's thought far more than Fichte's extreme doctrine of an uncompleted God, entirely immanent in the world process, a God who is "getting acquainted with Himself". Contrasting Carlyle with Fichte, Miss Storrs points to "the traditional theistic tone" in Carlyle's conception of divine activity. "The spiritual force of the world, though occasionally referred to as God, is more often treated as the law or activity of God, presupposing a divinity who acts thus, rather than one who is thus; who is the fount of goodness, beauty and truth, and so is more than these; a God who is complete and perfect from eternity, not merely in essence but in actuality, and is other than the urge which is directed toward perfection".²

1. Carlyle's neat pun, used in another context in "Signs of the Times", Essays, ii, p.72.
2. Op.cit., p. 76, Italics mine.

Carlyle, as we have seen in the foregoing chapter, was simply content to conceive of "the Divine Idea at the bottom of appearances" in his own way, as a manner of expressing the meaning of the symbol. As man is the highest symbol, the history of man is intrinsically symbolic, and Carlyle, following the instructions of Schelling in the Method of Academical Study, undertook, successfully, to write it symbolically, as the drama of God's activity. It is this which gives The French Revolution its "literary" significance, placing it in a class of its own, or rather, in the class of the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. Reading Schelling's Method, Carlyle must have found much food for thought. "The true symbol, with every manifestation of God in it, is history. But history is indeterminate, incommensurable. It should thus be represented by a manifestation at once finite and infinite, not itself real, like the State, but ideal, representing everything in the universal spirit in spite of the division of its parts. This symbolic conception is the Church, as a living work of art".¹

Since the spirit of man is the proper subject of historians, there is more to be learned from a history of the church than from a history of political states. Man's political history is the history largely of his physical well-being; his church history is that of his moral well-being. "Not the outward condition of his life, but the inward and spiritual, is of prime influence; not the form of Government he lives under, and the power he can

1. Sammtliche Werke, Stuttgart, 1859-61, vol. v, p.293, as quoted by Harrold, op.cit., p.105.

accumulate there, but the Church he is a member of, and the degree of moral elevation he can acquire by means of its instruction. Church History, then, did it speak wisely, would have momentous secrets to teach us: nay, in its highest degree, it were a sort of continued Holy Writ;¹ our Sacred Books being, indeed, only a History of the primeval Church, as it first arose in man's soul, and symbolically embodied itself in his external life....The History of the Church is a History of the Invisible as well as of the Visible Church".² Not the institutional church (the history of which Carlyle believed was soon to end), but the spiritual experience of man (which would never end) and its ever-changing outward manifestation was the subject of his interest. Counselling the students at Edinburgh on the choice of books, and thinking of Gibbon, Hume and Robertson, he felt it necessary to warn them that they would learn nothing from these "common history books", because "their position is essentially sceptical. God and the Godlike, as our fathers would have said, has fallen asleep for them; and plays no part in their histories. A most sad and fatal condition of matters; who shall say how fatal to us all! A man unhappily in that condition will make but a temporary explanation of anything; in short, you will not be able, I believe, by aid of these men, to understand how this Island came to be what it is".³ If the history of Britain was the nation's Bible, then prophets,

1. Cf. Karl Barth's development of the concept of the Church as the succession to the proclamation of the prophets and apostles in The Doctrine of the Word of God, trans. by Thomson, Edinburgh, 1936, p. 117, et passim.

2. "On History", Essays, ii, pp.92,3.

3. "Inaugural Address", Essays, iv, pp.462,3.

psalmists, evangelists, and apostles were the men to write it, not sceptics. Carlyle was intrigued by a reference to Marlborough he had somewhere read, that the great military hero had gleaned all he knew of the history of England from Shakespeare, who, "more than any other, might have done somewhat towards making History a Bible".¹ The genius of the poet and the dramatist he believed essential to the delineation of history, as did Schelling who taught that, without departing from facts, they should be represented "in a fulfilment (Vollendung) and Oneness (Einheit)....whereby they become the expression (Ausdruck) of the highest Ideas".²

The success with which Carlyle fulfilled this almost impossible ideal, of channeling dramatic power through the straight sluices of his historical material proves his greatness as a creative writer of history. The temptation that is presented to the writer with dramatic genius to play fast and loose with facts for the creation of "effect", is well-nigh irresistible. We have only to look today at the frequency of the appearance of "historical novels" to recognize how often the temptation is yielded to. If Carlyle questioned the validity of fiction, he would have been even more vehement against the "historical novel" which he surely would have seen as an illegitimate "doctoring" of facts.

When it is considered that with all his dramatic power, the exercise of which might have entitled him to the prerogatives of poetic licence, he still retained his integrity by an almost

1. Latter-day Pamphlets, p. 326.

2. Op.cit., pp. 291, 309-10, as quoted by Harrold, op.cit., p. 168.

fastidious and certainly religious devotion to facts, one can only add amazement to admiration.¹ Why, for instance, should he trouble himself with a most arduous wrestling with inadequate and contradictory sources to determine the exact meeting-place in 1740 of the first interview between Voltaire and Frederick?² Voltaire and Frederick themselves, their contemporaries, and all French and German historians since had not troubled themselves to establish this exact point in space, and any reader of Carlyle's biography would have not only forgiven him for specifying only the whereabouts, but probably would not even have noticed the missing detail. The reason for this is that Carlyle had a historian's creed. "Reality was sacred to him", writes Wilson, "a sacred science".³ The determination of facts, however trivial, was not so much a matter of satisfying the curiosity of inquiring readers as it was a duty to God. In events, not in general ideas, God was acting, and Carlyle's insistence upon the time and place of the event amounts to a kind of worship.

1. This integrity is essential to the historian, writes Paul Tillich in The Interpretation of History (Scribners', N.Y. p. 147). It is only "when methodical severity combines with pure devotion to matter that the understanding of the past becomes a living, creative deed, recreating the past - the achievement of great historians".
2. Frederick, iii, pp. 351, 2.
3. v, p. 309. Berdyaev declares, "Historical reality...is above all a concrete and not an abstract reality; and no concrete reality other than the historical does or can exist.... Everything genuinely historical has both a particular and a concrete character. Carlyle, the most concrete and particular of the historians, says that John Lackland came upon this earth on such and such a day. This is the very substance of history". (Quoted by D. Sayers, The Man Born to be King, London, 1943, p. 17).

We are here presented with one of the most interesting paradoxes in Carlyle's character, that his historical work is the very epitome of preciseness, the minute turning into the essential under the magic of his hand (the "sea-green" complexion of Robespierre and the convenient snuff-boxes scattered throughout Frederick's rooms), while his religious thought is the very epitome of vagueness. History was the theatre of "der Einheit des Realen und der Idealen". But while speaking of the Idealen we are presented with the great undefined adjectival nouns--the Infinite, the Eternal, the Immeasurable, and Inscrutable, which defy theology as meddling irreverence, when we come to the Realen we are provided with a wealth of detail and see our historian as anxious to establish a date as any 4th century theologian to fix the meaning of a word in the creed.

The paradox is partly resolved when we understand that Carlyle satisfied his Calvinistic "literalism" by compensating for the vagueness of his mystical strain in a "theology" of facts. He was convinced that the actual world was the one place where God made Himself known, through the moral order. "His accuracy in relation to all the local and personal detail of his story is unimpeachable", wrote Edward Caird, "and, indeed, rises to a level very rarely attained even by the most exact of modern historians. But he is always trying to penetrate beneath the facts to the ultimate moral forces, upon the strength of which he believes the conflict to turn, and to show that, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, the soul of the world is just".¹

1. Essays on Literature and Philosophy, Glasgow, 1892, i, p. 258.

We should perhaps be mystified by the expansion of the meaning of "fact" beyond the ordinary determinable event to the existence of God ("the Infinite is most sure of all facts") if we had not learned long since not to demand definitions from Carlyle. By "fact" he means what is incontestably true, that which no one would think of arguing over (e.g., mathematics), or what one believes in without a trace of insincerity, to the point of dying to uphold it (e.g., a religious belief). In an enthusiastic peroration on Prussia, he calls it "a Nation not grounding itself on extinct Traditions, Wiggeries, Papistries, Immaculate Conceptions; no, but on living Facts,-- Facts of Arithmetic, Geometry, Gravitation, Martin Luther's Reformation, and what it really can believe in:--to the infinite advantage of said Nation and of poor Teutschland herceforth".¹

Loyal as he was to his factual material, Carlyle was saved from floundering as an "Artisan" in the magnitude of data by his artistic view of the unity of history. This amounted to a poetic intuition of the mingling of all the past with the present and the containment therein of the seed of the future. "Consider all that lies in that one word Past! What a pathetic, sacred, in every sense poetic, meaning is implied in it..."² Memory and hope were the miraculous time-annihilators which permitted the infinite extension of the human spirit in two directions "before and after". The intuition of the actual presence of all the past which appears frequently in T.S. Eliot's poetry was as much in Carlyle's prose-poetry, so that, after reading it long enough,

1. Frederick, vii, p.491.

2. "Boswell's Life of Johnson", Essays, iii, p.79.

one has a unique impression of the virtual annihilation of physical time. The linear aspect of continuation subsides as one contemplates history as a solid (a geometrical metaphor he himself used in comparing mere narrative with interpretative history), the fusion of past and present. Here we see the practical force of his transcendentalism at work. Teufelsdröckh broods beside an ancient city, the chimney smoke rising from fires that have been burning for two thousand years turning his thoughts to "the far more mysterious live ember of Vital Fire" that continues glowing for centuries in man's political and religious institutions.¹ Dante's Divine Commedia does not stand alone as an isolated work of poetic genius, for in it are ten centuries of Christian devotion. Likewise the ordinary craftsman, using tools devised by other men, has "all past inventive men (working) there with him".² His sense of the unity of all events was impressed on Emerson at the time of his visit to Craigenputtock when, walking over the moors, Carlyle remarked, "Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence."³

This unity of past and present he found perfectly expressed in the idea of Igdrasil, the Life-tree of Scandinavian mythology, which has its roots deep down in all the past and its many leaves, green with present vitality, are dependent upon those unseen roots for their existence. Studying the myths of the Norsemen in

1. Sartor, pp.136,7.

2. Heroes, p. 98.

3. Emerson, English Traits, in Complete Works, London, (Macmillan), 1902, vol. iv, p. 13.

preparation for his first lecture on heroes, he had discovered this image and found it in perfect accord with the feelings he had long entertained in the language of Goethe's Mason's Song, picturing man as standing with the stars above him and the graves beneath, "in the conflux of two eternities" as he often expressed it. "Igdrasil (is) the Ash-Tree of Existence, has its roots deep down in the kingdom of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, spreads its boughs over the whole Universe: it is the Tree of Existence. At the foot of it, in the Death-kingdom, sit three Nornas, Fates,--the Past, Present, Future: watering its roots from the Sacred Well. Its 'boughs', with their buddings and disleafings,--events, things suffered, things done, catastrophes,-- stretch through all lands and times. Is not every leaf of it a biography, every fibre there an act or word? Its boughs are Histories of Nations. The rustle of it is the noise of Human Existence, onwards from of old. It grows there, the breath of Human Passion rustling through it;--or stormtossed, the stormwind howling through it like the voice of all the gods. It is Igdrasil, the Tree of Existence. It is the past, the present, and the future: what was done, what is doing, what will be done: 'the infinite conjugation of the verb To do'. Considering how human things circulate, each inextricably in communion with all,--how the word I speak to you today is borrowed, not from Ulfila the Moesogoth only, but from all men since the first man began to speak,--I find no similitude so true as this of a Tree. Beautiful: altogether beautiful and great. The 'Machine of the Universe',-- alas, do but think of that in contrast!"¹

1. Heroes, pp. 20,1. Cf. Past and Present, p. 38. See Appendix Three.

Not only did Carlyle stress the unity between all the past and the present, but also the present unity of mankind. To dramatize this, he often employed the device of a sudden shift of locale. We read a letter written from Potsdam by Frederick on December 16, 1773 to D'Alembert, and are then taken by surprise as our historian jumps half a continent and an ocean to the famous scene, then being enacted, of the Boston "Tea Party".¹ Thus we are reminded of the "one world" which we inhabit, and of the mysterious filaments that invisibly connect Prussians, Frenchmen, and Americans. Space as well as time is annihilated. Carlyle thought of society as an organism, made one by the "nervous tissues" connecting all its parts, of which "the Pericardial Tissue of Religion"² is the supreme uniting force. "I have strange glimpses of the power of spiritual union, of association among men of like object", he writes in his journal.³ New meaning had been put into the phrase of the creed, the "communion of saints" probably at first by Goethe in the passage of Wilhelm Meister already quoted in Chapter Four. This "inspired Communion of Saints, that is, of men in the highest degree good and wise"⁴ became a "grand perennial" thought to Carlyle.⁵ and is expressed in Sartor: "...the Wise Man stands ever encompassed, and spiritually embraced, by a cloud of witnesses and brothers; and there is a living, literal Communion of Saints, wide as the world itself, and as the History of the world."⁶

1. Frederick, viii, pp. 154-6.

2. Sartor, p. 184.

3. Two Notebooks, p. 164.

4. Wilhelm Meister, ii, p. 268.

5. Two Notebooks, p. 246.

6. P. 197.

This idea was the antithesis of society's atomization in the hey-day of individualism in thought as well as economic and political practice,¹ and invested his history and his social ethics with a conception that was an anachronism in the 19th century, though it is almost a common-place today. It is not surprising therefore that Carlyle's sympathy lay with the social adhesiveness of medieval life, with its loyalties, while he despaired of the equalitarianism of his own time which was making of every man a king.

For With the poetic images of Igdrasil and Organic Filaments² Carlyle's romantic vitalism asserted itself against mechanism and gave his historical thought a dynamic quality which previous historians had not possessed. The unity of past and present and of all mankind in the present was anything but a static "solidity", it was shot through with the never-ceasing activity of creation and destruction. To express this he used two other images, that of the myth of the phoenix-bird, and of palingenesis. As the unity of history was expressed in organic terms, so were its movements described as the growth and decay of institutions.

Here again we see the emphasis in Calvinism upon the temporality and brevity of all human lives transferred to the field of history, where all forms of existence come to be born, have their day, and pass away. The law of inexorable change was deeply

1. Individualism, or "the voluntary principle" was satirized in the Latter-day Pamphlets, as the new 'Sacrament of Divorce'! (p. 25)

2. Sartor, bk.iii, chap. 7.

impressed on his mind and gave him a peculiarly sharp insight into the meaning of revolution as the inevitable destruction of extinct social institutions, whether the feudalism of France or the ecclesiastical formalism of Laud. It was not that institutions ended because there was no longer any need for them (a utilitarian view Carlyle would hardly have shared).¹ The values of kingship and aristocracy did not pass into oblivion with the destruction of feudalism in France; on the contrary, had there been a responsible ruling class and a "sincere" church, it would have been well--there would have been no revolution and no need for one. Rather was their mortality due to the extinction of any moral force in them, so that they no longer stood as vital symbols, which would naturally evoke mankind's reverence. Were he living in our own revolutionary times, Carlyle would certainly have applied his conception to the contemporary revolution of the working classes against a capitalism which, though it had a religious origin in a divine sense of the stewardship of nature, is now emptied of its symbolic significance in a secular age.

To Carlyle, history was a drama of life, death, and rebirth, with institutions living when men were secure in their religious faith, and dying when scepticism gained ground. The ideal symbol was that of the phoenix-bird which flourishes for

1. This is Mrs Young's misinterpretation. "Carlyle's conception of (social institutions) is strictly functional..." This is to miss entirely his doctrine of institutions as the symbols of the human spirit, in which "functional" considerations are at a minimum. "Institutions arise to serve a social need, and possess vitality only so long as they minister to that need". (L.M. Young, Thomas Carlyle and the Art of History, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939, pp. 68,9.

hundreds of years and then is burned with fire, rising again from the ashes. Decrepit feudalism he saw had to be thus burned, because it had lived its span; democracy was useful as the burning agent, but from its ashes must rise again in new vitality what was essential to its original life and strength, i.e., the hierarchy of men, with some heroic enough to rule and the majority reverent enough to obey.

Carlyle could not share in the prevailing optimism of his day because of this view of democracy as a negative destructive agent rather than as the liberation of man and the great hope of the future. We have seen how he interpreted freedom in non-libertarian terms as the consequence of order and obedience, and so his hope lay in a palingenesia of nobler social institutions when a government of "the wise few" would replace the equalitarian illusions of democracy.

Palingenesia, which, in its use by Carlyle, is synonymous with the re-birth of the phoenix, is interesting because it indicates the new starting points in history. Carlyle did not use it in the personal soteriological sense of its New Testament meaning, but more in the sense with which Schlegel treats the idea of re-birth in his philosophy of history. As Professor Shine points out, Schlegel, whom Carlyle read, thought of history lying in a circuitous course, rather than a straight-forward march of humanity, as with Fichte.¹ Since he had no clearly defined philosophy of history, we cannot expect its key words,

1. H.Shine, Carlyle and the Saint-Simonians, The Concept of Historical Periodicity, Baltimore, 1941, p.75n.

such as palingenesis, to bear clearly defined meanings. While he did not have the conception, popular in his time, of history steadily progressing in a straight line, as a ladder of infinite length on which mankind mounts "onward and ever upward", neither did he view history as a cyclical process, as in Greek and Indian philosophy. As Professor Toynbee has pointed out in his observations on palingenesis, the Stoics probably used this term, of their own coinage, to express the recurrent birth of some identical thing.¹ In Indian thought, constant rebirth on an endlessly turning wheel of existence is such a dark fate that salvation is seen as an escape from it into Nirvana. Carlyle's palingenesis had nothing of this element of either meaninglessness or fatefulness. Indeed, the repetitive factor in re-birth did not concern him: "birth" or "new life" are closer to his meaning, denoting the inevitable appearance of some new historical phenomena with vitality (whether good or evil is not at issue here), when an old one has expired. In the modern era, May 4, 1789 was the precise day of such an appearance. "It is the baptism day of Democracy...The extreme-unction day of Feudalism! A superannuated System of Society....is now to die: and so, with death-throes and birth-throes, a new one is to be born".²

This life-death antiphony in Carlyle's thought runs counter to both the progressive and the cyclical patterns of historical movement. It might seem plausible therefore to combine the

1. Op.cit., vol. vi, pp. 169-75.

2. The French Revolution, i, p. 133.

images of ladder and cycle and call the process a "spiral, slowly upwards", as Mrs Young has done;¹ but this is to read a 20th century preoccupation with the future into Carlyle's thought, where very little "futurism" is to be found. He seems very little concerned with the goal of history. The end, or goal of history, did not enter into Carlyle's speculation because of his view that history was essentially unending. It was the vesture of God's eternity, and so not confined within sharp termini of creation and consummation. Man, not only in his individual life, but also in his historical existence, stood "in the conflux of two eternities". History he spoke of as "emerging out of the mysterious Eternity",² and disappearing again into the eternity of the future.

Then, too, there is too intense a feeling of present divine judgment to allow the entertaining of high hopes for the future. If anything, his thought evidences what Professor Toynbee calls "archaism" in contrast to "futurism". Interpreting his own time as one of social break-down, when the phoenix was being burned, he was inclined to prescribe a return to the non-democratic order of feudalism, though certainly in different terms, with responsible industrial leaders as the new aristocracy. Futurism, or the leap forward into a theoretical Utopia, was a type of thought utterly

1. Op.cit., p. 68. Mrs Young has gone so far as to describe Carlyle's philosophy of history as "an advanced evolutionary conception...a slow progress toward a better life for humanity". She calls the "evolutionary hypothesis" "an organizing principle in his speculative thinking". (.58).
2. "On History Again", Essays, iii, p.176.

alien from Carlyle's mind, and it is this which made his more optimistic contemporaries complain of his pessimism. He did not dance when they piped. Such a one was the elder Henry James, whose progressivist anticipations received harsh treatment at Carlyle's hands.¹ The enthusiasm expressed by Macaulay in the advancement of material well-being in the new age² was not shared in by Carlyle because of the ascetic quality of his religious and moral thought. After all, the fundamental achievement of his life had been liberation from the material and utilitarian thought-forms which were both the spiritual cause of material advances and the basis for the satisfaction men found in them.

It is not easy for us to discover precisely what Carlyle did believe about progress, partly because of his own ambiguity, and partly because of our own modern identification of progress with improvement. At the first glance, his "archaism" and hostility toward the spirit of liberalism would seem to mark him clearly as completely sceptical of all ideas of progress. In his letters to Emerson, commenting upon certain contemporary American versions of progressivist thought, he seems to condemn

1. "He never had the least idea, that I could discover", complained Henry James, "of the true or intellectually educative nature of this conflict (of good and evil in human history), as being purely ministerial to a new and final evolution of human nature itself into permanent harmony with God's spiritual perfection. He never expressed a suspicion, in intercourse with me,--on the contrary, he always denounced my fervent conviction on the subject as so much fervent nonsense,--that out of this conflict would one day emerge a positive and faultless life of man..." ("Some Personal Recollections of Carlyle", Atlantic Monthly, Vol. XLVII, May, 1881, pp.605,6).
2. See G.M. Trevelyan, "Macaulay and the Sense of Optimism", The Listener, Feb. 12, 1948, p. 258.

it unequivocally as unrealistic and sentimental. Someone had sent him "a Progress-of-the-Species Periodical from New York. Ach Gott! These people and their affairs seem all 'melting' rapidly enough, into thaw-slush or one knows not what. Considerable madness is visible in them. Stare super antiquas vias: 'No', they say, 'we cannot stand, or walk, or do any good whatever there; by God's blessing, we will fly,--will not you!--here goes!' And their flight, it is as the flight of the un-winged,--of oxen endeavoring to fly with the 'wings' of an ox! By such flying, universally practised, the 'ancient ways' are really like to become very deep before long. In short, I am terribly sick of all that..."¹

On the other hand, he seemed occasionally (more frequently in his early period) to be lecturing to himself to resist an intemperate pessimism; he could not, after all, be completely immune from the optimism that surrounded him. After condemning the trends of his age toward materialism in the economic and political fields and its effect in the weakening of religion, he seems in "Signs of the Times" to be almost forcing himself to retain a proper balance. "Neither, with all these evils more or less clearly before us, have we at any time despaired of the fortunes of society. Despair, or even despondency, in that respect

1. Correspondence, ii, p.49. Cf. i, p.125. In the essay "Characteristics", he seemed to regard the discussion of progress as an unhealthy introspection. "What, for example, is all this that we hear, for the last generation or two, about the Improvement of the Age, the Spirit of the Age, Destruction of Prejudice, Progress of the Species, and the March of Intellect, but an unhealthy state of self-sentience, self-survey, the precursor and prognostic of still worse health". (Essays, iii, p.18).

appears to us, in all cases, a groundless feeling. We have a faith in the imperishable dignity of man; in the high vocation to which, throughout this his earthly history, he had been appointed. However it may be with individual nations, whatever melancholic speculators may assert, it seems a well-ascertained fact, that in all times, reckoning even from those of the Heraclides and Pelasgi, the happiness and greatness of mankind at large have been continually progressive. Doubtless this age also is advancing. Its very unrest, its ceaseless activity, its discontent contains matter of promise. Knowledge, education are opening the eyes of the humblest: are increasing the number of thinking minds without limit. This is as it should be; for not in turning back, not in resisting, but only in resolutely struggling forward, does our life consist".¹

To attempt to bring these two contradictory attitudes together would be doing violence to Carlyle's thought. At this point he is plainly inconsistent. Perhaps Emerson was thinking of his friend when he coined the proverb, "Consistency is the hob-goblin of little minds". We can only say that he talked of progress very little at any time of his life, and then mostly in his earlier years. The more the doctrine of progress in evolutionary terms took hold of the minds around him, the more critical he became of it. In any event, he does not seem to see in it the basis for the hope which fired his contemporaries, and spoke of progress usually in terms of the accumulation of knowledge and good actions--

1. Essays, ii, p.80.

a "piling up" of experience rather than a forward march. This was in accord with his conception of the indestructible past which we have noted. Believing as he did in history's dynamic character, progress meant to him no more than the word literally means--onward-going. Too much the ascetic to take consolation in the increase of physical conveniences (the new railways he regarded as an unmitigated curse), too much the prophet to accept the assurance that man's moral nature was improving, he simply accepted the obvious fact that no man ever stands in the same position occupied by his father or grandfather, and if this could be called progress, he would not quarrel over a word. One of the few times he addressed himself to the subject was in the lectures on heroes. "I do not make much of 'Progress of the Species', as handled in these times of ours; nor do I think you would care to hear much about it. The talk on that subject is too often of the most extravagant, confused sort. Yet I may say, the fact itself seems certain enough: nay we can trace-out the inevitable necessity of it in the nature of things. Every man, as I have stated somewhere, is not only a learner but a doer: he learns with the mind given him what has been; but with the same mind he discovers further, he invents and devises somewhat of his own. Absolutely without originality there is no man. No man whatever believes, or can believe exactly what his grandfather believed: he enlarges somewhat, by fresh discovery, his view of the Universe, and consequently his Theorem of the Universe,--which is an infinite Universe, and can never be embraced wholly or finally by any view or Theorem, in any conceivable

enlargement: he enlarges somewhat, I say; finds somewhat that was credible to his grandfather incredible to him, false to him, inconsistent with some new thing he has discovered or observed. It is the history of every man; and in the history of Mankind we see it summed-up into great historical amounts,--revolutions, new epochs".¹

One thing he did formly believe, that a lie could not endure, that history's order would not support it. False beliefs or false actions carry the seeds of their own destruction, and the eventual triumph of truth and goodness is inevitable. "God is great: all Lies do now, as from the first, travel incessantly toward Chaos, and there at length lodge!"² But this is neither a secular doctrine of progress nor a metaphysical philosophy of history like Fichte's: it is Carlyle's form of the Christian understanding of history. In the operation of the moral law, he recognized a God who was both sovereign over history and everywhere active in it.

¹ It was not a steadily mounting crescendo of progress so much as a rhythm of periodicity, the antiphonal alternation in human history of periods of belief and unbelief, of sincerity and insincerity, which marks the sense of movement in Carlyle's philosophy of history. For this, we see again his indebtedness to Goethe, who, in a note to the West-Oestlicher Divan, provided the terms which immensely appealed to the Calvinist searching for a specifically religious interpretation of history. Carlyle

1.. Heroes, p.118.

2. Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson, ii, p.183.

quoted this note in the essay on Diderot, as follows: "'The special, sole and deepest theme of the World's and Man's History,' says the Thinker of our Time, 'whereto all other themes are subordinated, remains the Conflict of Unbelief and Belief. All epochs wherein Belief prevails, under what form it may, are splendid, heart-elevating, fruitful for contemporaries and posterity. All epochs, on the contrary, wherein Unbelief, under what form so-ever, maintains its sorry victory, should they even for a moment glitter with a sham splendour, vanish from the eyes of posterity; because no one chooses to burden himself with study of the unfruitful'".¹ This is the seed which sprouted and eventually flowered in an enthusiastic presentation of the period of Cromwell and Puritanism as England's supreme age of belief, when no cleavage existed between the supernatural and the natural orders. It was not necessary that he should personally enter into the theological thought-forms of the Puritans; what impressed him was as much how they believed as what they believed. The strength of their convictions, the intensity of their sincerity, he saw expressed in the actual attempt to build

"Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land".

No better example appeared to Carlyle of the alternation of the periods of belief and unbelief in history than the extremes of the theocracy of the Protectorship and the degeneracy of the Restoration.

1. Essays, iii, pp. 247,8.

Antiphonal periodicity is perhaps most clearly seen in the one attempt Carlyle made to give a sweeping summary of human history from the Greek civilization onward, namely, in the Lectures on the History of Literature. Here we see the unity of belief at first organized around "the system of Polytheism and Paganism"¹ in the pre-Socratic period. "The mind of the whole nation, by its means, obtained a strength and coherence".² Socrates was followed by a spiritual decline, in the age of speculation and scepticism. He describes a similar high point and decline in Roman history, Virgil and Horace being followed by Ovid, Seneca, and Lucan. "From this time we get more and more into self-consciousness and into scepticism".³ The next great age of faith was that of mediaeval Europe. "In the Middle Ages, we see the great phenomenon of Belief gaining the victory over Unbelief".⁴ In this age, Catholicism and Feudalism united Europe with firm religious and political loyalties, and were not shaken until the turning point at the Diet of Worms.⁵ The modern period in reacting against mediaevalism arrives at a new stage of unbelief in the destructive scepticism of the 18th century, and Carlyle ends his survey with the hope that western culture is now (1838) at the verge of another era of belief, ushered in by romantic idealism, chiefly through the German philosophers and poets. "Thou, Eternal Providence, will cause the day to dawn".

1. P. 53.

2. Ibid., p. 55.

3. Ibid., p. 48.

4. Ibid., p. 54.

5. Ibid., pp. 121, 22.

On the spiritual phenomena of modern European history, Carlyle holds a rather ambiguous view. On the one hand, in Heroes,¹ he interprets the Reformation as the first of three acts in a drama depicting the rise of private judgment, and the undermining of ancient religious and political loyalties. The other two acts are English Puritanism and the French Revolution. From this, one would expect him to regard the Reformation in an ominous light, as the fountain-head of the atomistic individualism he so deplored. His praise of mediaeval Catholic faith, as in Book II of Past and Present, where he lauds the naturalness of religion among the monks, who worship "a heaven-high Unquestionability",² seems to confirm the suspicion that he views any departure from the centuries of faith as a decline. On the other hand, his admiration of Luther, whose life and period he came close to writing, and his history of Cromwell, leave no doubt that he estimated the 16th and 17th centuries as among the greatest of all ages of belief. Catholicism had once deserved the devotion of men, but at last came to be a false sovereignty, ripe for destruction. Characteristically, he does not enter into the theological issues of the Reformation vs. Catholicism without an appreciation of which it seems almost nonsense to interpret the 16th century. He is concerned only to commend the intensity rather than the content of Protestant faith, and in this he manifests quite plainly his romantic anti-intellectualism.

1. Pp. 123ff.

2. Pp. 60,66.

To conclude, Carlyle's pattern of periodicity was a very flexible form into which he could fit any historical phenomenon of spirit by the simple criterion of its general positive or negative character. The same phenomenon is even capable of a double classification. From the point of view of its negative protest, the Reformation is the beginning of a bad tendency to individualism. Considered as an expression of positive faith, it is one of man's nobler periods. Important as it is, it is possible to over-stress the element of periodicity, to make it appear as a rigid formula. It would be wrong, for instance, to interpret it as an English version of the Hegelian dialectic of thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Apparently, Carlyle's knowledge of Hegel was only by hearsay, and his rare references to him are invariably hostile.¹ He would not have appreciated Hegel's philosophy of progress, especially in its abstract rational form. In an excellent study of Carlyle's concept of periodicity, Professor Shine has drawn together nearly all the innumerable allusions, direct and indirect, to the division of history into ages of belief and unbelief, concluding that the Goethean formula congealed under a strong influence of St. Simonian thought. He sets out to show that the writings of the St. Simonians, developing five main elements in the concept of periodicity² gave a final form to Carlyle's thought, but his

1. E.g., Sartor, p.10., "Characteristics", Essays, iii, p.41, and Espinasse, op.cit., p. 59.

2. "(1) Statement of the law of progressive periodic mutation,
 (2) Characterization of the two kinds of epochs in each period.
 (3) Definition of the method of transition between periods.
 (4) Designation of the two complete periods in past European history, and
 (5) Interpretation of the present and the future in the light of periodicity" (Op. cit., p. 31).

conclusion as to the French school's pivotal importance seems unjustified in the light of its peripheral position in Carlyle's mind during two or three short years (1830-32,3), and the almost complete absence of any explicit acknowledgment of indebtedness on Carlyle's part.

It is far more enlightening to substitute as touchstone the word providence for progress or periodicity, for this brings us to see the dominating Christian element in his view of history, and its dependence upon the Calvinistic faith.¹ Carlyle had no interest in theological formulations of the doctrines of providence or predestination. When pressed by pious acquaintances to confess to the traditional faith they saw in his writings, he invariably expressed his indifference.² And yet no orthodox Christian thinker ever had a stronger sense of the hand of God in history. It was difficult even for theologians to see anything but the devil's work in the anti-religious destructiveness

1. The almost complete indifference to this guiding factor in Carlyle's philosophy of history in such a work as Professor Shine's (op.cit.,) (Calvinism is mentioned only once) is a great mistake.
2. E.g., on providence, in a conversation in 1842 reported by the Quakeress, Caroline Fox. "I early came to the conclusion that I was not very likely to make (providence) out clearly: the notions of the Calvinists seem what you cannot escape from, namely, that if it's all known beforehand, why, it all must happen. This does not affect your actual work at all; and if you have faith that it is all just and true, why it won't harm you to shape any notions about it. I don't see that we do any good puzzling our poor weak heads about such things while there is plenty of clear work before (us) in the regions of practicability. In the meantime, I know that I have uncontrolled power over one unit in creation, and it's my business in life to govern that as well as possible. I'm not over-fond of Bolingbroke's patronizing Providence, nor of Voltaire's,--'If there were no God, we should be forced to invent one for the completion of the system'". (Caroline Fox, Memories of Old Friends, i, p.162).

of "Sansculottism", set in motion of Voltaire and Rousseau, but Carlyle, deeply imbued with the sense of providence, could interpret it as the wrath of man praising God.¹ "Fear not Sansculottism", he declares; "recognise it for what it is, the portentous inevitable end of much; the miraculous beginnings of much. On other thing thou mayest understand of it: that it too came from God; for has it not been? From of old, as it is written, are His goings forth: in the great Deep of things; fearful and wonderful now as in the beginning: in the whirlwind also He speaks; and the wrath of men is made to praise Him".² This Biblical language is no mere rhetoric. It represents the insight of the Hebrew prophets who saw Yahweh marshalling the heathen nations against Israel to punish her for her iniquities, but at the same time promising that they too would incur His future wrath for their heathen presumptions against Yahweh and His chosen nation. The mystery and complexity of divine judgment from which no one is exempt, the punished, or the punishers, was driven in upon Carlyle's religious mind. "Dark is the way of the Eternal, as mirrored in this world of Time: God's way is in the sea, and His path is in the great deep".³ Thus does Carlyle utter judgment upon the royal household of France, about to have the sins of their fathers visited upon them. 1792 in France is the direct result of 1572. The massacre of Protestantism on the night of St. Bartholomew brought a writ of Summons from Heaven. "Heaven's Messenger could not stay away

1. "Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.." (Ps. xxvi.10).

2¹/₂ The French Revolution, i, p. 213.

3. Ibid., ii, p.5.

for ever. No: he returned duly; with accounts run up, on compound interest, to the actual hour in 1792; and then, at last, there had to be a 'Protestantism': and we know of what kind that was!" The "question of questions" for France, Brandenburg, all nations, is "Will you obey the heavenly voice, or will you not?"¹

The relationship between the destiny of men and nations and divine law, which is everywhere in the Old Testament, is the guiding theme of Carlyle's history. Reflecting the famous dictum of Schiller, "Die Welts-Geschichte ist das Welt-Gericht", Carlyle is the historian of judgment, par excellence. There is at times almost a mathematical formulation of his idea of the equity of the divine administration, as in the passage just quoted from Frederick, with God described as the eternal Book-keeper, carefully meting out measure for measure. This is an emphasis which has always crept into forms of religion which are predominantly moralistic and legalistic. "The law, not the gospel, was for him the true bond of intercourse between God and man, and between man and man as well", rightly observed Henry James.² Wherever law is paramount, equity and a somewhat mechanical justice have play. The human judge must sentence all men equally for the same crime, and he must apportion each sentence strictly to the nature of each crime. Likewise, God as Judge of men and nations, is no respecter of persons, and exactitude is the manner of His Rule. He brings kings down from their thrones with a violence suitable to the violence with which they had oppressed their people. He also causes a people to endure the consequences of their morally

1. Frederick, i, p. 223.

2. Op.cit., p. 606.

reprehensible choice of and acquiescence to unjust rulers. The people of Saxony are propelled toward their doom at the hand of Prussia by their apathetic acceptance of dissolute and luxurious rulers--for a king an "August the Physically Strong" with his three hundred and fifty-four bastards, for a prime minister a fastidious dandy, Count Bruhl who has twelve tailors sewing for him constantly. "Why (do) Populations suffer for their guilty Kings? My friend, it is the Populations too that are guilty in having such Kings. Reverence, sacred Respect for Human Worth, sacred Abhorrence of Human Unworth, have you considered what it means? These poor Populations have it not, or for long generations have had it less and less. Hence, by degrees, this sort of 'Kings' to them, and enormous consequences following!" Such nations can have no heroes over them, because they are themselves unheroic. They "can only have this or the other scandalous swindling Copper Captain, constitutional Gilt Mountebank, or other the like unsalutary entity by way of King: and the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children in a frightful and tragical manner..."¹ This is the side of Carlyle which would be profitable for the post-war study of ex-Nazis who distorted Carlyle's hero-worship into a defense of Hitler and National Socialism!

If Carlyle is to be criticized for his apology for Prussian militarism, so, in consistency, must the Hebrew prophets be criticized for interpreting the aggression of the Assyrians and Babylonians as the instruments of God's judgment. It is a

1. Frederick, v, p. 33, and viii, p. 9 respectively.

rigorous doctrine which can morally uphold the destruction of the weak by the strong. But Carlyle was no more rigorous than history itself, and weakness, it must be remembered, always meant to him the moral sterility of a nation, such as an Ireland in the time of the Civil Wars, or a Poland prepared for Partition by spiritual bankruptcy.¹ Admittedly, the great defect of Carlyle's philosophy of history is his too great readiness to accept uncritically the use of power as a pure instrument of divine judgment. One's discomfort, reading him, arises from his insufficient recognition of the human taint that is perpetually corrupting "just conquerors". Instead of going on to prophesy the doom of Assyria (Prussia), he lapsed too often into an apparently uncritical state of mind, falling short of a transcendent perspective which sees all nations standing before the bar of God's judgment. He so eagerly pursued his intention of delineating Frederick as a hero and Prussia as a well-disciplined nation, founded on "facts", that he is betrayed into partiality, the besetting sin of the existential historian, and is unable to assess blame more than tentatively upon Frederick's vulturous consumption of his share of Poland's carcass, to say nothing of the conquest of Silesia.

1. "Poland was now dead and moribund, and well deserved to die. Anarchies are not permitted in this world". Precedent for the use of the veto to create anarchy in the Security Council of the United Nations is to be seen in "the incredible Law of Liberum Veto", introduced in Poland in 1652 and continued for over two hundred years: "the power of one man to stop the proceedings of Polish Parliament by pronouncing audibly 'Nie pozwalam, I don't permit!'" (Frederick, viii, pp. 55,6.)

To Carlyle the Calvinist believed in providence to such an extent that at times it took on a distinctly predestinarian cast: anything that happens is the providence of God. "The Partition of Poland was an event inevitable in Polish History: an operation of Almighty Providence and of the Eternal Laws of Nature, as well as of the poor earthly Sovereigns concerned there".¹ As staunchly as any orthodox believer he protested against the interpretation of either the universe's creation or the course of history as the product of fortuitous circumstances. He told Allingham that the belief "that the Universe could come together by chance was, and is altogether incredible. The evidence to me of God--and the only evidence--is the feeling I have deep down in the very bottom of my heart of right and truth and justice. I believe that all things are governed by Eternal Goodness and Wisdom, and not otherwise; but we cannot see and never shall see how it is all managed".²

This belief in providence united with his belief in the preservation of all that is good in the past to produce a doctrine that was abhorrent to his contemporaries and at times apparently contradictory to his own high moral sense. This was the doctrine that might is right, in the long run. Does this establish his membership in the cult of power with Nietzsche and his 20th century dictator-offspring?³

1. Frederick, viii, p. 119.

2. Op.cit., p. 268.

3. A question that has been answered in the affirmative by numerous writers since 1918. See N.Young, Carlyle, His Rise and Fall, London, 1927, and E.Bentley, The Cult of the Superman, London, 1947. The latter, a distorted "study" of Carlyle and Nietzsche, quotes Nietzsche approvingly as dubbing Carlyle an atheist with too much honor ever to admit it!

To many modern observers,¹ the facts that Carlyle was the historical "advocate" of the birth of the Prussian state and that he opposed democratic rule in favor of rule by heroes have been quite sufficient to establish this hypothesis without further investigation.

First, let us consider Carlyle's own words on the subject. In Past and Present, we are told: "In all battles, if you await the issue, each fighter has prospered according to his right. His right and his might, at the close of the account, were one and the same. He has fought with all his might, and in exact proportion to all his right he has prevailed. His very death is no victory over him. He dies indeed; but his work lives, very truly lives".¹ Praising the enduring qualities of Puritanism, and pointing to "American Saxondom" as one of its results, in the lectures on heroes, he declares,..."all goes by wager of battle in this world;...strength, well-understood, is the measure of all worth. Give a thing time; if it can succeed, it is a right thing."²

In Chartism, Carlyle used the idea to defend the right of conquest, or more accurately, the right of holding territory once conquered. "No conquest could ever become permanent, which did not show itself beneficial to the conquered as well as to the conquerors...The Romans having conquered the world, held it conquered, because they could best govern the world". The same inherent authority was invested in the Normans, who brought unity

1. P. 12.
2. P. 143.

of rule to Britain and maintained it because they were better able to than the disunited Saxon nobles. "How can-do, if we will well interpret it, unites itself with shall-do among mortals; how strength acts ever as the right-arm of justice; how might and right, so frightfully discrepant at first, are ever in the long-run one and the same,--is a cheering consideration, which always in the black tempestuous vortices of this world's history, will shine out on us, like an everlasting polar star".¹

No one today would cherish a resentment against the Normans as unjust conquerors, preferring the England of pre-1066. The long centuries of comparative order, and the building up of a stable culture have vindicated their conquest which only at the time seemed unjust. As to the extension of this culture through imperial conquest in all quarters of the globe, Carlyle did not think twice about the superiority of the civilized English over the uncivilized African or the Australian aboriginal. The right of the British nation to rule primitive countries inhabited by anarchic and ignorant tribes was axiomatic. The prosperity of and comparative order within the British Empire in the 19th century was sufficient proof to him of its justification, and, by contrast, any "right" of colonies of less civilized inhabitants to be sovereign was unthinkable. "They are portions of the general Earth, where the children of Britain now dwell; where the gods have so far sanctioned their endeavour, as to say that they have a right to dwell. England will not readily admit that her own children are

1. Essays, iv, p.147.

worth nothing but to be flung out of doors! England looking on her Colonies can say: "Here are lands and seas, spice-lands, corn-lands, timber-lands, over-arched by zodiacs and stars, clasped by many-sounding seas; wide spaces of the Maker's building, fit for the cradle yet of mighty Nations and their Sciences and Heroisms. Fertile continents still inhabited by wild beasts are mine, into which all the distressed populations of Europe might pour themselves, and make at once an Old World and a New World human. By the eternal fiat of the gods, this must yet one day be; this, by all the Divine Silences that rule this Universe, silent to fools, eloquent and awful to the hearts of the wise, is incessantly at this moment, and at all moments, commanded to begin to be".¹

To the fundamental question at the root of all discussions of the rights of conquest and possession, i.e., "Whose land was this of Britain?" Carlyle startles us with the ultimate religious answer, and shakes the confidence which we have placed absolutely in human historical investigations and human courts of arbitration. "No property is eternal but God the Maker's: whom Heaven permits to take possession, his is the right; Heaven's sanction is such permission,--while it lasts; nothing more can be said. Why does that hyssop grow there, in the chink of the wall? Because the whole Universe, sufficiently occupied otherwise, could not hitherto prevent its growing! It has the might and the right. By the same great law do Roman Empires establish themselves, Christian Religions promulgate themselves, and all extant Powers bear rule. The strong thing is the just

1. Latter-day Pamphlets, pp. 152,3.

thing: this thou wilt find throughout in our world;--as indeed was God and Truth the Maker of our world, or was Satan and Falsehood?"¹

Obviously, all this is easily capable of misinterpretation and misuse. Those who have misinterpreted Carlyle's identification of might and right as the uncritical worship of power have been of two kinds: on the one hand, liberal equalitarians who have not understood the problem of order as Carlyle understood it, nor shared his horror of anarchy, and so have condemned him unreservedly; and on the other, adherents of the Nietzschean power-cult, who have not understood either the religious basis or the severe moral qualifications of his doctrine, and so have embraced him unreservedly as a fellow-fascist. Neither has really understood what he meant.

Quite simply, Carlyle's idea is a logical deduction from the religious premises of his philosophy of history. God is great, i.e., He is the absolute Sovereign of the movements within history. God is good, i.e., His rule insures the final vindication of all good and the final defeat of all evil. Therefore, any good done in the world is indestructible; it is bound to endure. Anything that endures is a mighty thing; it possesses strength. It is only the logical next step which turns the coin around and states the obverse; any mighty thing, any enduring thing is, by definition, of God, a good thing: it is

1. "Chartism", Essays, iv, p. 174.

right.¹ Was Carlyle justified in turning the coin around? If we grant his religious premisses and his logical deduction, the answer must be in the affirmative. But if we have so answered, we do not find ourselves in the temple of the worshippers of power for its own sake. On the contrary, we are in an entirely different spiritual and moral environment.

The all-important qualifying clause, which, significantly is hardly ever absent from his formulations of this idea, points to the long stretch of time which is required to prove that any mighty thing is a right thing: "if you await the issue", "Give a thing time", "might and right are...in the long run, one and the same". It was Carlyle's determination to state his concept sharply, often exaggeratedly, knowing it was an unconventional thought, it was his preference, often erroneous, of the surprise attack to the reasoned argument, which relegated this essential qualification to a subordinate clause, and so caused the misunderstanding. Of course, it was the best part of the argument, and no one who shared his religious views or his knowledge of history could have long denied that, in his sense, might was right. Indeed, this leading idea, in terms of history, was his statement of faith in an omnipotent God. Carlyle's firm belief in the rule of God did not permit him to think that a wrong could endure for long. In this, he mirrors the faith which runs

1. It will be remembered that Goethe in Wilhelm Meister acknowledges the superiority of the Jewish religion because it has endured. "At the Ethnic judgment-seat, at the judgment-seat of the God of Nations, it is not asked whether this is the best, the most excellent nation, but whether it lasts, whether it has continued". (ii, p.270).

so strongly through the Old Testament, and in particular, the Psalms;--the faith in a God who sifts out the wicked like chaff from the good wheat. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish".¹

It hardly seems necessary to emphasize the moral qualification which was part and parcel of the time qualification. It is only responsible strength, the force that brings moral order where there has been disorder, which endures. Irresponsible strength is not even strength.² It is doomed in the administration of divine justice to quick death. What he is really saying is that right is might, that wrong is, in the long run, weakness. The reversal of the magnitudes of the equation did not in any way change the truth. Froude quotes Carlyle's own remonstrance against those who misunderstood and misinterpreted him. "With respect to the poor heresy of might being the symbol of right 'to a certain great and venerable author', I shall have to tell Lecky one day that quite the converse or reverse is the great and venerable author's real opinion--namely, that right is the eternal symbol of might; as I hope he, one day descending

1. Ps. i,5,6.

2. Emil Brunner is wise to point to the ingredient of justice in all true political power. Not only a State's prestige but its actual physical power is increased by its moral integrity. A strong nation that is in the right has more security in its rightness than in its strength, because its enemies are deprived of the possibility of resisting it by a plausible attack on its "unjust" and "tyrannical" power. See his Justice and the Social Order, London, 2nd impression, 1946, p. 188, et passim.

miles and leagues beyond his present philosophy, will, with amazement and real gratification, discover; and that, in fact, he probably never met with a son of Adam more contemptuous of might except where it rests on the above origin".¹ Protesting to C.E. Norton of the same misconception, Carlyle gave an interesting revelation of the religious significance of the idea, to which we have pointed. "This is the very precise and absolute contrary to the truth I hold and have endeavoured to set forth, namely and simply, that Right makes Might. Well do I remember when in my younger days the force of this truth dawned on me. It was a sort of Theodicy to me, a clue to many facts to which I have held on from that day to this".² We surmise that Carlyle, had he lived a century later, would have been among the first to prophesy the doom that awaited Germany as the penalty for the barbarities of her Nazi leaders.

If we condemn as idle, surmises of what Carlyle would have thought in a century not his own, what can be observed about the practical application of his belief to the contemporary question of the British Empire? Is it true, as one German historian has said, that Carlyle is "the father of British Imperialism?"³ There seem to be innumerable passages in which Carlyle expresses his consciousness of Britain's destiny, but it is so informed with moral responsibility, so determined by a typically Calvinistic sense of the stewardship of the earth, of the trust of

1. iv, p.422. Cf. Wilson, vi, p.313 for Lecky's statement indicating that Carlyle did indeed set him right on this score.
2. C.E.Norton, "Recollections of Carlyle", New Princeton Review, July, 1886.
3. G. von Schulze-Gaevernitz, Britischer Imperialismus und englischer Freihandel, Leipzig, 1906, p.78.

empire, that it is not to be compared with 20th century racial nationalism or mere predatory conquest. As Bodelsen makes clear, Carlyle never speaks of the colonies as possessions which Britain has the right to exploit solely for the benefit of the home-land (the practice of Spain in the Americas which eventually brought her downfall), but as undeveloped territories which God has given to those who can develop them, by emigration from the mother-country of men who will be do-ers.¹ The benefit thereby assured for the governed as well as the governors is the test for the justification of empire. Britain had a duty to govern peoples who could not govern themselves. By this attitude he placed himself uncompromisingly against doctrinaire democrats who assume that it is better for a nation to govern itself badly than to be governed well. "The stern Destinies", he wrote in the "Repeal of the Union", "have laid upon England a terrible job of labour in these centuries...extending superficially to the Indies and the Antipodes over all countries...; it is..governing, regulating,.. and climbing as high as the zenith to snatch fire from the gods, and diving deep as the nadir to fling devils in chains...! Conquering Anarchy; which is not conquerable except by weapons gained in Heaven's armoury..."². In these last words, we see clearly the disparity between Carlyle's "imperialism" and the arbitrary use of national power for its own sake. Here, in the practical issue of the British role in the world, the exercise

1. C.A. Bodelsen, Studies in Mid-Victorian Imperialism, London, 1924, pp. 23-32.

2. Rescued Essays, ed. by Percy Newberry, London, n.d. p. 34f.

of "might" is closely hedged in by the demand for right, and is not otherwise justifiable.¹

It is as lamentable as it is understandable that the point at which Carlyle has been most furiously attacked is his emphasis upon the hero in history. There are two reasons for this: (1) the aura of military prowess in which the idea of the shrewd use of force is predominant, which still clings to the word "hero",² and which, as we shall see, carries only a minor fraction of Carlyle's meaning; and (2) the highly questionable dogma of the equality of all men, rendering the modern democratic world unsympathetic with enthusiasm for human greatness. This dogma has had its effect in many spheres. In biography, it has resulted in the familiar process of disparagement and the portrayal of great men with an emphasis upon their faults, reducing them to the mediocre proportions of their biographers, and worse. In politics, it has asserted the infallible rightness of the majority.

1. It does not sound like the familiar imperialist "bogey" speaking when we read the following passage in Heroes, worth quoting for its contemporary application to India: "Consider now, if they asked us, Will you give up your Indian Empire or your Shakespeare, you English: never have had any Indian Empire, or never have had any Shakespeare? Really it were a grave question. Official persons would answer doubtless in official language; but we, for our part too, should not we be forced to answer: Indian Empire, or no Indian Empire: we cannot do without Shakespeare! Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakespeare does not go, he lasts forever with us; we cannot give up our Shakespeare". (P.109f).
2. E.g., One modern standard dictionary, of five possible definitions, gives as the first, "A man, especially a warrior, of the Greek epic or heroic age", and another, "A person of distinguished valor and fortitude". (Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed., 1937).

In history, it has "explained" the great man in deterministic, environmental terms as the inevitable "product of his age". The preference for mediocrity has blinded modern man to one of life's most obvious truths: that men are profoundly unequal in their capacities, in their moral and spiritual stature. It is no accident that contemporary history has exhibited a recoil from the equalitarianism which has its roots in 18th century rationalism, by a romantic Fuhrer-worship, perverse in proportion to its extreme reaction. Carlyle's own recoil is plain in all his writing; it is at many points, open to criticism. But it is health itself compared with the sickness of modern dictator-worship, for it has the realism which equalitarianism lacked, and a moral basis which is absent from the 20th century reaction against equalitarianism.

Carlyle's hero is of another breed than the warrior, the man of military might. He is defined as one "who lives in the inward sphere of things, in the True, Divine, and Eternal, which exists always, unseen to most, under the Temporary, Trivial: his being is in that: he declares that abroad, by act or speech as it may be, in declaring himself abroad. His life...is a piece of the everlasting heart of Nature herself: all men's life is,--but the weak many know not the fact, and are untrue to it, in most times: the strong few are strong, heroic, perennial, because it cannot be hidden from them".

1. Heroes, pp. 155,6.

The constant refrain in the lectures on heroes is that he is the sincere man. This quality is as applicable to religious leaders, the Luthers and Mahomets, to poets and thinkers, the Shakespeares and Johnsons, as it is to military and political leaders, the Cromwells and Napoleons. The hero must be utterly sincere, that is, entirely free from the base motives of hypocrisy, the distortion of thought and action by ulterior considerations of expediency. He must abhor cant with Johnsonian vehemence.

Carlyle made the quality of sincerity into a positive virtue. But this was dangerous, for sincerity of itself has no content, referring as it does to the degree of intensity, or faith with which one may uphold any belief or intention, be it good or evil. At this point, the romantic exaggeration of feeling played him false. Even his rigorous devotion to what is "right" at times became confused with what is fervently "felt to be right". Thus, when Frederick confesses candidly "the desire of making oneself a name" in the Silesian conquest, Carlyle applauds his frankness as sincerity, forgetting that candidness without self-criticism makes one's faults even more inexcusable.¹

Allied to the quality of sincerity was that of "unself-consciousness". He never tired of reiterating that genius is unaware of itself. It was a leading motif in the essay "Characteristics", and had been impressed on him by Schiller.²

1. Frederick, iii, p. 405.

2. Cf. Love Letters, i, p. 305.

Shakespeare's greatness was the more assured by his not knowing he was great, which is only another way of saying that vanity ruins genius, that humility is the essential pre-requisite for the free play of the great man's power. This is Christian psychology, pure and simple, the antithesis of the modern introspective sickness of anatomizing personality. Also, it is not unconnected with Carlyle's view of the great man as the revealer of God. An introspective pride blocks the human channel of God's truth, as He attempts to reach the world.

The place of Fichte in the formulation of Carlyle's religious conception of the hero is supremely important. To Fichte, the man who stood out in history, especially the thinker, is the medium of the Divine Idea in the world of appearances. His philosophy presents the Christian doctrine of the Mediator in the new dress of absolute idealism. What rightfully belongs to the One True Man is referred to all true men. "In the life of the Divine Man the Godhead is manifest in the flesh, reveals itself to immediate vision, and is perceptible even to outward sense. In their life the unchangeableness of God manifests itself in the firmness and intrepidity of human will which no power can force from its destined path. In it the essential light of the Divinity manifests itself in human comprehension of all finite things in the One which endures forever. In it the energy of God reveals itself, not in directly surrounding the Human Race with happiness--which is not its object--but in ordering, elevating, and ennobling it. A God-like life is the most decisive proof which man can give of

the being of God".

This passage from the Nature of the Scholar¹ sank deeply into Carlyle's mind. It provided an interpretation of the kindred significance of prophets and poets as hero-revealers of the Divine Idea, which, as we have seen, meant to Carlyle the moral goodness embodied in divine law.² Above all, Fichte had given him a sense of the mission of "inspired thinkers" in the idea of the priesthood of the literary man. In the "State of German Literature", he declared, as Fichte's and his own belief, that "Literary Men" are the appointed interpreters of this Divine Idea; a perpetual priesthood, we might say, standing forth, generation after generation, as the dispensers and living types of God's everlasting wisdom, to show it in their writings and actions, in such particular form as their own particular times require it in.³

Carlyle's consistent concern with symbols led him to see the great men as the perfect symbol of the divine,⁴ and the focal point of revelation. He was fond of quoting a reputed saying of St. Chrysostom's, "The true SHEKINAH is Man".⁵ "Where else is the GOD'S-PRESENCE manifested not to our eyes only, but to our hearts, as in our fellow men?"⁶

1. Fichte, Popular Works, trans. by Smith, London, 1873, pp. 210-11.

2. See Heroes, p. 80.

3. Essays, I, p. 58.

4. Sartor, p. 178.

5. A. MacMechan, in his edition of Sartor, gives the reference in Chrysostom's Works and shows that the quotation was Carlyle's own, and only generally related to an idea of the Christian father's. (Sartor Resartus, ed. by MacMechan, Boston, 1897, p. 313n.)

6. Sartor, p. 52, Cf. Heroes, p. 10.

Following the suggestion in Faust, he thought of man as a microcosm. "Every mortal is a microcosm, to himself a macrocosm, or Universe large as Nature".¹ Every human soul is a "Symbol of Eternity, imprisoned into Time".² But all men are not equally lucent symbols. Some possess gifts which show them to be the peculiar revealers of the Reality behind appearances. These gifts are moral and intellectual. Carlyle declared his view of what makes men unequal early in life, and never departed from it. "I believe it to be a truth...that a man's dignity in the great system of which he forms a part, is exactly proportioned to his moral and intellectual acquirements".³ It is the "see-er" which elicits Carlyle's admiration most frequently. The hero is "a believer in the divine truth of things; a seer, seeing through the shows of things; a worshipper, in one way or the other, of the divine truth of things".⁴

If the hero is the supreme symbol, hero-worship is the cement of society. Reverence for one's superiors is preached as the duty of every man. "Canst thou in any measure spread abroad Reverence over the hearts of men?" he asked himself in his journal in 1831. "That were a far higher task than any other". That this was not simply a new version of feudalism is proved by the radicalism which Carlyle maintained at the same time. He did not spare his scorn of the worthless aristocracy "preserving

1. "Varnhagen von Ense's Memoirs", Essays, iv, p.109.

2. French Revolution, i, p.20.

3. Letter of May 20, 1818, Conway, op.cit., p. 167.

4. Heroes, p. 116.

their game". Like Thomas Jefferson, he believed only in an "aristocracy of worth". But, given the worthy hero, Carlyle deemed it a mark of the worthlessness of a people if it withheld its reverence in a spirit of independence. "The prime want of man", he wrote in The French Revolution, is "true Guidance in return for loving Obedience".¹ Only in reverently bowing down before the Higher does (man) feel himself exalted".² "Independence of all kinds is rebellion".³ Individualism, the companion of equalitarianism, had introduced disunion into society, running against the facts of the differing worth of men, and destroying reverence. However suspicious the Christian must be of the elevation of the merely human hero to too divine a position, he must recognise in Carlyle's inveighing against independence the essential Christian concept of the dependent, reverent relation of man to God.

It is often forgotten that Carlyle was as concerned that a people be heroic as he was that heroes be recognized leaders. Indeed the recognition would not take place, if the people did not in some measure believe in and live by the same high moral truths, a peculiar loyalty to which qualified the hero. It is perhaps a weakness that Carlyle did not emphasize this more, for it was the only possible answer to the great question: if the

1. Vol. i, p.9.
2. Sartor, p. 200.
3. Ibid., p. 186.

ballot-box will not do, how can a people find the hero to govern them? If he used Napoleon's phrase, "La carriere ouverte aux talens" (the tools to him that can handle them), it was with a characteristic alteration of its original cynical import. He meant that the man with ability--always a moral and spiritual qualification--should be accorded reverence. Comparing Carlyle's hero-worship with Comte's wretched "Culte systematique de l'Humanite", Masson observes that reverence "for those of your fellow creatures that seem worthiest of reverence is invoked expressly on the principle that they were servants of God and may be regarded as manifestations of God".¹

While Carlyle's heroes were many, including Shakespeare, Dante, Johnson, Knox, Luther, and Cromwell, it must be admitted that he sometimes exhibited an unhappy choice of leaders to commend especially. Cromwell is perhaps the exception, though even with the great Protector Carlyle stood himself too close to Puritanism to gauge fully the peculiar human tragedy of intolerance vanquishing intolerance. The case of Dr. Francia is a definite lapse from his own principles.² He became the advocate of the Paraguayan dictator in a fit of peevishness over the panacea his contemporaries saw in representative government. The choice of Frederick the Great of Prussia was not fortunate, though it is suspected that most of those who have maligned Carlyle for his "Prussianism" have not taken the time to wade through this the most thorough of his works. If they had, they

1. Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, London, 1885, pp. 96, 7.

2. "Dr Francia", Essays, iv, pp. 261-321.

would have discovered a great many qualifications considerably reducing Frederick's heroic size, and which Carlyle was too faithful a historian to conceal. Principal among them was Frederick's irreligious mind, which he shared with the 18th century generally. Indeed, Carlyle wonders that the age of scepticism had as much heroism as it had.¹ In the last of the eight volumes, with the magnificent narrative of the wars behind him, Carlyle observes of Frederick that he has no great depth or singularity of character.² Actually, he was chosen rather by accident, because he was the last of the hereditary kings before the birth of democracy, to whom Carlyle felt it a political duty to pay tribute. And he was a ruler of the nation which Carlyle had long admired as the cradle of the Reformation and the home of Goethe and Schiller.

The principal defect of Carlyle's idea is his under-estimation of the corruption of power which besets the soul of every political leader. One might think that his pessimism concerning human nature might keep him from this. Actually, he is so intent upon the problem of political order, and so determined to be realistic rather than sentimental, that he fails to be troubled enough with the morally precarious position of the political leader. If a man is working in pitch, he tells us, he cannot keep his hands clean. This borders on acquiescence to the corruption of power, and to that extent is a falling-away from his prophetic emphasis.

1. Frederick, iii, p.308.

2. Ibid., viii, p.5.

In the light of his own activism, which excluded the enervating fears of moral risk which paralyze the perfectionist and make him passive, Carlyle could not but see a higher moral duty in the use of power than in abstention from it. The ruler of men, after all, lived under the mandate of God. His view of the state stands in the stream of Christian thought which flows from the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God".¹ Defending Cromwell's right to power with much the same Biblical language as the Protector himself would have used, Carlyle declares, "The love of 'power', if thou understand what to the manful heart 'power' signifies,² is a very noble and indispensable love... God gives it him; let no Devil take it away. Thou also art called by the God's message: This, if thou canst read the Heavenly omens and dare do them, this work is thine. Voiceless, or with no articulate voice, Occasion, god-sent, rushes storming on, amid the world's events: swift, perilous; like a whirlwind, like a fleet lightning-steed: manfully thou shalt clutch it by the mane, and vault into thy seat on it, and ride and guide there, thou! Wreck and ignominious overthrow, if thou have dared when the Occasion was not thine: everlasting scorn to thee if thou dare not when it is;...Yes, this too is in the law for a man... Thou shalt is written upon Life in characters as terrible as Thou shalt not..."³ The negative scruples of the unrealistic perfectionist have no place in Carlyle's thought. He is willing

1. Rom. xiii, 1.

2. Italics mine.

3. Cromwell, iii, 83,4.

to assume the risk of power, but always for moral reasons, never arbitrarily. The political leader who does not use his power beneficently, who is not in tune with the providence and moral will of God, is doomed to destruction. Thus the subordination of power to the sovereignty of God makes it forever impossible to link Carlyle with the Nietzschean advocates of arbitrary, autonomous human power.¹

It may well be asked, however, in defining the relation between Carlyle's theory of the hero and his religion, if the disturbance of the balance of the classical doctrines of Christianity does not inevitably produce something like hero-worship. This may be summed up in three statements and their implications. (1) Man's nature requires a transcendent God. (2) Man requires a unique revelation. (3) Man requires a Divine Redeemer.

(1) When the full height of divine transcendence disappears from sight, the threat of an extreme "immanentism" becomes serious, and God becomes the highest point in human history, i.e.,

1. It is misleading, therefore, with all the allusions that come immediately into modern minds when the word "dictator" is mentioned,--the symbol of unlimited, self-justifying power--when a usually careful historian such as G.M. Trevelyan declares that Carlyle made "the frightful error of believing that one-man dictatorship was the solution (for the evils of society)". ("Thomas Carlyle as a Historian", The Listener, Oct. 2, 1947, p.568). Thus a distinguished German thinker, for whom proximity to the dictator made him all too familiar with his qualities, writes, "What Carlyle meant by 'heroism' or 'leadership' was by no means the same as what we find in our modern theories of fascism". As the principal difference, he points to the fascist dictator's conscious use of deception in propaganda, and compares it to Carlyle's insistence on sincerity and truth. We are reminded of Carlyle's condemnation of Napoleon for his use of lies in his bulletins. (Ernest Cassirer, The Myth of the State, London, 1946, p.216.

great men, or the movements of history itself (Marxianism). We miss the perspective of divine judgment which stands above and beyond all history, all national and individual destinies. All peoples and all "heroes" are no longer required to prostrate themselves in humility before the holy, righteous, transcendent God.

(2) When the unique revelation disappears, the general revelation comes into play, in pantheism, and the indiscriminate equalization of all religions. God is then revealed in no particular truths, but every human "truth" is "God", and finally all "truths" become equally truthful, and relativism succeeds to humanism.

(3) When the redeemer is discredited, other human redeemers are sought; historical saviours are vested with a religious aura.

Carlyle marks a kind of half-way position between the security of classical Christianity and the immanental, relativistic, and saviour-hungry insecurity of modern godlessness. For him, divine transcendence is sufficiently retained to judge evil in history with prophetic severity, but not sufficiently to challenge all the pretensions of human heroes. The unique revelation has been abandoned in favor of a view which shows at least the serious temptation of pantheism, but not yet the abyss of relativism. The Redeemer has lost His absolute "exceptionableness", but is still the supreme "hero", so supreme as to be mentioned with a quite exceptionable degree of reverence. But His dethronement has been accompanied, not accidentally, by the coronation of many other substitute kings.

If Hero-worship is the inevitable result of a departure from classical Christianity, it is likely, on the other hand, that it could not grow at all, at least in the form it assumes in Carlyle's thought, except on Christian soil, especially that peculiar soil of Calvinism. The fundamental inequality of men, divided into the elect and the non-elect, is carried over into the division between leaders who know Reality, or God, and are chosen by Him, and followers, who of themselves are blind to the highest religious and moral truths. Beyond the peculiar emphasis of Calvinism upon election, hero-worship seems to reflect the fundamental Christian belief in the supernatural origin and the incomparable spiritual dignity of man, who is no less than the imago dei.¹ But the reflection is distorted, as it were, in a concave mirror, for Carlyle is inclined to say that only the hero possesses the image of God, and sometimes he seems to forget the corruption of sin which spoils the godlike nature of his hero, thus failing to maintain the dialectic of Christianity's simultaneous optimism and pessimism about the nature of man.

1. In the "Hero as Divinity", Carlyle seems to be entertaining a sympathy for the reversal of the Christian doctrine of the imago dei in the pagan creation of gods in the image of man. Odin is selected as the deification of an ancient hero. He is not nearly so scandalized by this "idolatry" as he is by the rejection of Burns, whom men should have idolized, recognizing the demi-god in their midst. There is a subtle connection between the truth of the imago dei and its inversion. When the absolute pre-eminence of God is forgotten, and men are no longer horrified at the scandal of the idol, the subtle replacement of other idols is made. Man, who is the true image, in the confusion of his self-idolatry, makes God the image of himself. St. Paul accuses the Greeks because they "changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man". (Rom. i, 23). This was not accidental. God's transcendence and holiness forgotten, such an exchange was inevitable. Humanism, the apotheosis of general human nature or of particular heroes, is the necessary successor to an abandoned Christian faith. Without God, man must himself be God.

Likewise, hero-worship may be seen as the distorted reflection of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation in the God-Man. It signified a diffusion of the glory of the One Divine Man over many divine men, the replacement of the Christ who was "once for all" by other Christs who are unlimited in number and are the redeemers of their own several generations.¹

In summarizing the findings of this chapter, we may say that Carlyle, as the opponent of "scientific history" wrote didactic history, in the manner of the prophets. His history is universal, in the sense of man's perennial moral situation. History is a Bible, and the historian an evangelist. It must be seen as symbolic, and the historian, dealing with this symbol, must write as the prophet, the poet, and the dramatist. An unbelieving historian is a monster, incapable of performing his true function. The popular conception that a religious faith robs a historian of objectivity he would have condemned as patently false, for how can a godless man interpret God's world? On the contrary, by virtue of his faith, Carlyle exhibits a notable loyalty to "facts", since God speaks through concrete events, in the operations of His judgment, preserving the good, and destroying evil.

The sense of the unity of history is strong in his mind, both that of all the past with the present, and that of all living men. History is the vital "Life-tree" and men are

1. The relation of hero-worship to Christianity is recognized by Grierson, but only by the general comment: "Hero-worship supplied the vacancy left by the decay of his early faith..." H.J.C. Grierson, Thomas Carlyle, London, 1940, p. 18).

spiritually joined in a "communion of saints". Nevertheless, the solidity of history is shot through with the dynamics of change. Institutions are as mortal as men, because when divested of their life, their capacity to symbolize man's moral and spiritual beliefs and aspirations, they are dead and must be buried, if not peaceably, by revolution. But the new phoenix forms even in the ashes of the dying one. Palingenesia renders the world a place of hope, for while old institutions are dying, new ones are being born.

Thus the movement of history is a life-death antiphony, sounding before the throne of God, and "progress", "cycle", "spiral" are all inadequate words to express its trend. Carlyle is not concerned with the future so much as to preserve the past. For him, history is divided into great ages of belief, punctuated by periods of scepticism. His heart as a historian therefore belongs to mediaeval Europe, and to the age of Puritanism, and if more pages were written on the 18th century, it was because of his mission as a "literary priest" to reveal the spiritual poverty of that period of denial. What hope he had he put in the new spirituality of romantic idealism.

Above all, Carlyle is the historian of God's judgment and providence. The vicissitudes of nations he sees to be determined by their obedience or disobedience to the will of God. "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children" is his guiding text. The conviction that God held the reins of history, and that no power could forge ahead except by His permission, led to

his often misunderstood theory that might, in the long run, is right. Conversely, right is deserving of might: the extension of British rule to lands far away is justified by the relative superiority of its justice.

The theory of hero-worship which has mistakenly accelerated Carlyle's ill-fame in an age prejudiced by equalitarianism on the one hand, and impressed by the horror of unbridled dictatorship on the other, is seen to be a religious idea, for the great man is the light point through which God's truth shines into a dark world. Carlyle reverses the greatness of intellect and moral courage, and when the exercise of pure force is excused it is because of his sincere conviction that its subjects are so destitute of moral insight that any kind of order is preferable to their anarchy. The necessary complement to the hero is a heroic people. In a sense, Carlyle is a "democrat" because he sees the only possibility of the recognition of the hero to depend upon the moral qualities of the people, who, without them, are doomed to misrule.

The relation of hero-worship, the highest form of humanism, to an abandoned Christian faith, is seen to be close. God is immanent in great men. The "Word is made flesh" is reduced from a particular to a general phenomenon. A levelling process takes place: as Christ is reduced to the status of "supreme hero", great men are elevated to be revealers and redeemers.

CHRISTIANITY AND THE CHURCH.

"That you, with your generous hopeful heart, believe there may still exist in our actual Churches enough of divine fire to awaken the supine rich and the degraded poor, and act victoriously against such a mass of pressing and ever-accumulating evils--alas! what worse could be said of this by the bitterest opponent of it, than that it is a noble hoping against hope, a noble strenuous determination to gather from the dry deciduous tree what the green alone could yield?"

(Carlyle in a letter to Thomas Chalmers)¹

At the storm center of criticism of Carlyle we find most numerous those who are earnest believers in traditional Christianity and loyal supporters of the Church. This has been due to the fact that Carlyle appeared to be bitterly antagonistic toward the time-honored institutions of organized religion. Precisely when it seemed that he was adhering to a new or old faction in England's religious world, he would express himself clearly and boldly, until disillusion concerning Carlyle's "Christianity" became universal. The Church of England he called a dead religion of "formulas", the Methodists were satirized as enthusiasts, Unitarianism was regarded as "a hollow compromise", and the leaders of the Broad Church movement provoked only the remark, "They will get up something". He never became affiliated in any way with any church or any religious movement.

This chapter must describe briefly the elements of Carlyle's attitude toward orthodox Christianity as contained in its traditional beliefs, and to determine more clearly than is commonly understood where Carlyle stands in reference to the Christian

1. W. Hanna, Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Chalmers, Edinburgh, 1852, iv, pp.199-201.

religion.

It was a difficult time for Carlyle when he came to see clearly that the beliefs of his orthodox parents could not be his own. During that period of scepticism which began in his university years, he gradually realized that if a religion was to be had at all, it could not be the old one, but only a result of working out for himself an intellectually respectable faith. The beliefs of his parents, and apparently of the church in general seemed to the young Carlyle to rest on the miraculous, to which he could not subscribe. Faith in a literally infallible sacred Book, belief in the absolute truth of the miracles related therein, the conception of Christ as the one and only Son of God, born of the Virgin and resurrected from the dead, the idea that Christianity with its roots in Judaism was the only true religion--all these beliefs were "intellectually incredible" to him. There can be no doubt that the reading of Gibbon's history had much to do with the formation of Carlyle's attitude. His revolt was gradual but definite, making necessary a change of direction in his future plans from the ministry to a literary career. It must be said that Carlyle never did possess the bent of mind requisite to a thorough-going career in the Church. In the origins and evidences of Christianity and in the study of historical Christian theology, he could stir up but little interest. He was content to be stopped by those beliefs to which he could not adhere, and determined not to affiliate himself with any pattern of thought in which he could not wholly believe.

Having rejected the ministry, Carlyle, however, had by no means arrived at his final evaluation of Christianity. We have already noted the influence of Goethe in pointing out to him the so-called "essential truth" of the Christian religion. The question must be pursued as to what attitudes Carlyle did develop.

As early as 1811, Carlyle disturbed his mother with the question as to whether God actually did come to earth to make wheelbarrows in a carpenter's shop. In 1875, at the end of his life, the Incarnation was still "foolishness" to him. He commented to Allingham on an article in Fraser's Magazine by Newman on "Primitive Christianity", "I could not read it. I know Primitive Christianity was some sort of high and holy enthusiasm. I do not in the least believe that God came down upon earth and was a joiner and made chairs and hog-troughs; or came down at any time more than He comes down now into the soul of every devout man. There is no use saying anything more in the matter. Let it rest here".¹ He found it impossible to believe that Jesus was the supernatural son of God, conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. In none of his writings early or late did Carlyle militantly oppose the doctrine of Christ's divinity, for he hesitated to be destructive of even a belief regarded as false when it was so much a part of the religion of countless of his fellow-men. It must be admitted that Carlyle appreciated more highly the person of Jesus than did many who professed their faith in his Son-ship. To compensate for his disbelief in a single Son of God, Carlyle adopted a view of all men as sons of God, and

1. Allingham, op.cit., p.238.

particularly emphasized the divinity of those "heroes" who are especially blessed with genius.

Carlyle does not speak specifically of Jesus in the first chapter of Heroes, but we surmise that he is representing in the story of Odin his belief concerning the origin of Jesus' belief in his own divinity. "What if this man Odin", Carlyle asks,-- "since a great deep soul, with the afflatus and mysterious tide of vision and impulse rushing on him he knows not whence, is ever an enigma, a kind of terror and wonder to himself,--should have felt that perhaps he was divine; that he was some effluence of the 'Wuotan' Movement, Supreme Power and Divinity, of whom to his rapt vision all Nature was the awful Flame-image; that some effluence of Wuotan dwelt here in him. He was not necessarily false; he was but mistaken, speaking the truest he knew...With all men reverently admiring him with his own wild soul full of noble ardours and affections, of whirlwind chaotic darkness and glorious new light, a divine Universe bursting all into godlike beauty around him, and no man to whom the like ever had befallen, what could he think himself to be? 'Wuotan?' All men answered, 'Wuotan!'--"¹ Certainly Carlyle did not regard Jesus as a fraud. It was only natural that a man with such "superhuman" insight should be curious, and at least convinced of his divine origin and nature. And, essentially, Carlyle believed he was right. Christ was divine, but not alone divine.

One cannot study Carlyle's words concerning Christ without seeing in them a great deal of irresolution. For all theoretical purposes, he appears to have abandoned any idea of an exclusive

1. Heroes, p.25.

revelation or a unique Revealer. For all practical purposes, he stands as firm as any churchman to oppose the onslaught upon the church's central doctrine of the Incarnation. Such inconsistency suggests a deplorable falling away from his own ideal of sincerity and his hatred of cant. But he had trained himself too long in tenderness toward the religious sensibilities of his parents. He had so despised the negative, destructive role of the French sceptics, that he instinctively avoided the temptation to become a British Voltaire. When Strauss' Life of Jesus was translated by George Eliot into English, he called it "a revolutionary and ill-advised enterprise, setting forth in words what all wise men had had in their minds for fifty years past, and thought it fittest to hold their peace about".¹

Around the authority of the Bible as the infallible word of God and only rule of life, a tremendous controversy was raging in Carlyle's day. From the earliest part of his career, Carlyle indicated that he entertained no illusion about the human origin and nature of the book.² But on both the doctrines of inspiration and the incarnation, Carlyle actually held his peace. This was not done, however, without the exercise of much restraint.

1. Allingham, op.cit., p.211.

2. Goethe, in 1782, expressed in a letter to Lavater, substantially what Carlyle came to believe later. "You consider the Gospel as it stands divine Truth. A distinct voice from Heaven would not convince me that water burns and fire quenches, that birth may be miraculous and that a dead person is raised to life; far more do I consider all this blasphemy against the great God and his revelations in Nature. You find nothing beautiful than the Gospels; I find a thousand written pages by ancients and moderns just as beautiful and useful and indispensable to humanity".

He threatened to lead an "Exodus from Houndsditch", to free the essential truth of religion from the thralldom of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, but this intent was permitted to go no further than private protests. These were expressed in short MSS., hastily written and then suppressed until Froude printed them in his biography.¹ In one of them, Carlyle states it to be his principal mission--what we have seen in the foregoing chapter--to preach that "all history is a Bible". This universal, historical revelation therefore places him in direct opposition to the Hebrew-Christian claim of a particular revelation through the events which occurred to a chosen people. "If we had any vivacity of soul and could get the old Hebrew spectacles off our nose, should we run to Judaea or Houndsditch to look at the doings of the Supreme? Who conquered anarchy and chained it everywhere under their feet? Not the Jews with their morbid imaginations and foolish sheepskin Targums. The Norse with their steel swords guided by fresh valiant hearts and clear veracious understanding, it was they and not the Jews. The supreme splendour will be seen there, I should imagine, not in Palestine or Houndsditch any more".²

It was in his immanentism on all questions of revelation--seriously qualifying the species of Calvinist transcendentalism so evident in his concept of divine judgment--which was expressed in another MS under the interesting title of "Spiritual Optics". This was, as it were, the assertion of the primitive belief that

1. Vol. ii, pp. 8-18.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

light proceeds from the individual eye. In terms of revelation, spiritual truth comes not from an outside source, but from the inner eye of man's spirit. The Christian religion does not have its source in books or traditions but "in the purest nature of man".¹ Carlyle desired to show that all "second-hand religion", accepted on mere authority, on the simple basis of a recognized claim to an external revelation, was false religion. But more important, he wished to relax the exclusiveness of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, in favor of a view that would acknowledge the light which proceeded from the "inner eyes" of non-Christian religions. He was concerned to make the religious and moral truths common to all religions the foundation of true religion. This was thought of as a kind of Copernican revolution, in the realm of the spirit. Just as Copernicus had discovered the sun to be stationary and the earth moving, the geocentric giving way to the heliocentric view of the universe, it was now time to reverse the spiritual perspective and show that the familiar greatness and goodness of God "stood still" while man "moved around Him", looking at Him from many different religious vantage-points in the orbit of his history, but always seeing the same truth. Thus, Carlyle became, through the limited means of history and literature, one of the 19th century pioneers of the study of "comparative religion", which was the expression in scholarship of the liberal concern to destroy the "particularity" of Christianity, and to replace it by the universality of the "essential truth" of all religions. At the end of the lecture on "The Hero

1. "Voltaire", Essays, i, p. 457.

As Divinity", he quotes Wilhelm Meister, "'To which of these Three Religions do you specially adhere?' inquires Meister of his Teacher. 'To all the Three!' answers the other: 'To all the Three; for they by their union first constitute the True Religion'".¹ Carlyle's lecture on Mohammed was a strange subject in 1840, but by the end of the century, such an interest in other religions was no longer revolutionary, since the "tolerance" and universalism of liberalism had by then come to be familiar aspects of common belief. Writing in 1846 to another historian, Carlyle indicated this hostility toward particular revelation. He commended him for his "co-ordinating of sacred events with events called 'Profane'. We ought to know always that if any one of them be sacred, they are all sacred. That is the right use to make of the, at present, very burdensome 'Hebrew element' in our affairs. In this way we shall conquer it, not let it conquer us."²

His ambiguity appears, however, in the fact that Carlyle was not as "emancipated" from the exclusive claims of the Christian faith as he himself sometimes assumed. Completely innocent of any doctrine regarding Christ, he nonetheless so frequently uses language placing him in an absolutely unparalleled position of eminence that obviously it would be wrong to describe him as a non-Christian. He writes, in Sartor, "Our highest Orpheus walked in Judea, eighteen hundred years ago; his sphere-melody, flowing in wild native tones, took captive the ravished souls

1. P. 41.

2. Letter to William Bridges, Nov. 19, 1846, in Conway, op.cit., p. 211.

of men; and, being of a truth sphere melody, still flows and sounds, though now with thousand-fold accompaniments, and rich symphonies, through all our hearts; and modulates, and divinely leads them".¹ The very fact that he consistently maintained a reverent silence about the life of Christ, and kept him out of all his historical studies, is an indication of the special place accorded to him. Later humanists expatiated at length concerning the moral significance of Jesus, the peasant-rabbi. Apparently, to Carlyle, the minute study of the "historical Jesus", then dawning upon the world, seemed a rather blasphemous enterprise.

Carlyle had an ambiguous attitude toward the Bible as well. Although no longer believing it to be an infallible oracle, he practically revered it above all books. If he was addressing one whom we would now call a "fundamentalist", such as Edward Irving, he would depreciate the Bible's uniqueness. "Authentic 'writings' of the Most High, (are) they found in old Books only?"² On the other hand, with a non-fundamentalist audience, he would himself speak like a fundamentalist. "The Hebrew Bible, is it not, before all things, true as no other Book ever was or will be?"³ Just as he half-believed in the Incarnation, Carlyle half-believed in the peculiar sacredness of the Scriptures. If they were not God's exclusive means of reaching men, they were His highest means. He called the Bible "the kissed Book".⁴ Carlyle did not radically equate the Bible with other human

1. P. 210.

2. Reminiscences, ii, p. 206.

3. Latter-day Pamphlets, p. 323.

4. Ibid., p. 314.

literature as did Goethe;¹ it kept its pre-eminent position. Nor did he ever train his batteries against the "superstition" or "obscurantism" or "incredibilities" of the Bible, for his indebtedness to it was too great. Knighton reports him speaking warmly of the sublimity and beauty of the Hebrew Scriptures, and only after them did he place Homer as "the next book to the Bible for everything grand and great".² Perhaps his most eloquent testimony was given in "Corn-Law Rhymes" where he refers to the "one Book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light, and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever is deepest in him; wherein still, to this day, for the eye that will look well, the Mystery of Existence reflects itself, if not resolved, yet revealed, and prophetically emblemed; if not to the satisfying of the outward sense, yet to the opening of the inward sense, which is the far grander result".³

On the controversy raging in his day on the biological origin of man versus the Creation myth, Carlyle remained a staunch Biblicist, though in the interest of his enmity to materialism rather than because of a desire to defend the Bible's inerrancy. Symington reported his saying, "The short, simple, but sublime account of Creation given in the first chapter of Genesis is in advance of all theories, for it is God's Truth, and, as such, the only key to the mystery. It ought to satisfy

1. See supra, p. 256.

2. W. Knighton, "Conversations with Carlyle", Contemporary Review, XXXIX, June, 1881.

3. Essays, III, p. 142.

the savans, who, in any case, would never find out any other, although they might dream about it.' Then, alluding to the development hypothesis, waxing warm, and, at the same time bringing his hand down on the table with a thump like the sledge-hammer of Thor, he emphatically added: 'I have no patience whatever with these GORILLA DAMNIFICATIONS OF HUMANITY!'"¹

With these brief considerations of Carlyle's ambiguous evaluation of the Christian doctrine of revelation, we turn to his attitude toward the expression of Christianity in its contemporary organized forms. He lived in a time when static institutionalism was striving with many liberal and pseudo-liberal movements, with the latter seeming to have the upper hand. Froude describes for us the general character of the times. "It was an era of new ideas of swift if silent spiritual revolution. Reform in Parliament was the symbol of a general hope for the introduction of a new and better order of things. The church had broken away from her old anchorage. The squire parsons, with their sleepy services, were to serve no longer. Among the middle classes there was the Evangelical revival; the Catholic revival at Oxford had convulsed the University, and had set half the educated men and women in England speculating on the authority of the priesthood and the essential meaning of Christianity. All were agreed to have done with compromise and conventionalities".²

At such a time it is inevitable that religion should suffer in its influence upon men's minds and hearts. Controversy is

1. A.J. Symington, Some Personal Reminiscences of Carlyle, Paisley, 1886, pp. 51, 2.
2. Froude, iii, p. 247.

intellectually stimulating, but, to Carlyle's mind, it was the first sign of failing religion. The truest religion means a rule of conduct which is the law of God. In the England of these days, religion was only opinion, with an occasional outpouring of emotional benevolence to take the place of justice, ("philanthropic phosphorescences" Carlyle called them!) Religion had ceased to take effect over men in their ordinary business, and therefore, it was only a hollow appearance. Instead of conceiving of religion as bearing a command to duty, the modern world was laboring under the misapprehension that compulsion was to be abolished, and universal freedom established, with every man to follow the light of his own conscience.

In "Signs of the Times", Carlyle indicated what he believed to be ideal religion--"a thousand-voiced psalm from the heart of Man to his invisible Father, the fountain of all Goodness, Beauty, Truth, and revealed in every revelation of these". It was far from that in England, Carlyle perceived, for now it was "Expediency" and "Utility" which formed the basis of men's calculations.

In Sartor Carlyle devoted a chapter to "Symbols" in which he appraised "church-clothes" and their value to society. He recognized the necessity of fellowship in religion when he wrote in "Characteristics", "Religion arises (and) acquired certainty, continuance, when it is shared-in by (man's) brother men". The Church, in its purest form Carlyle regarded, as the symbol of the shared religion. "For Carlyle, as for Schelling, the highest symbols were 'religious symbols', and the Church, when it was a

vital symbol, appeared to him, as to Schelling, the greatest symbol of all".¹ "What an advantage has the pulpit", Carlyle wrote in his journal in 1831, "where you address men already arranged to hear you, and in a vehicle which long use has rendered easy; how infinitely harder when you have all to create--not the ideas only and the sentiments, but the symbols and the mood of mind! Nevertheless, in all cases where man addresses man on his spiritual interests especially, there is a sacredness, could we but evolve it, and think and speak in it".²

When Carlyle did consider, he recognized in his own mind and made it clear to others that creeds and churches have their necessary place, symbolizing as they do the intangible truths by tangible expressions. To his friend John Sterling, who at that time was busy in his little Welsh parish, Carlyle wrote on June 4, 1835: "...I can rejoice that you have a creed of that kind which gives you happy thoughts, nerves you for good actions, brings you into readier communion with many good men. My true wish is that such creed may long hold compactly together in you, and be 'a covert from the heat, a shelter from the storm, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land'. Well is it if we have a printed litany to pray from; and yet not ill if we can pray even in silence; for silence too is audible there".³

The following passage from The French Revolution is a revelation of an inner conviction of Carlyle's concerning the

1. Harrold, op.cit., p. 105.
2. Froude, ii, pp. 208, 9.
3. Froude, iii, p. 43.

value of creeds and churches: "Strong was he that had a Church, what we can call a Church: he stood thereby, though 'in the centre of Immensities in the conflux of Eternities', yet manlike towards God and man; the vague shoreless Universe had become for him a firm city, and dwelling which he knew. Such virtue was in Belief; in these words, well spoken: I believe. Well might men prize their Credo, and raise stateliest Temples for it, and reverend Hierarchies, and give it the tithe of their substance; it was worth living for and dying for".¹

This was by no means a blanket approval of all churches, but rather a statement of the worth of sincere belief in a creed, whatever it might be. For dumb worship which is devoid of any intellectual endorsement Carlyle had only pity, alternating with contempt. Catholicism he regarded as having sunk into the worst kind of unintelligibility. "He who would understand to what a pass Catholicism, and much else, had now got; and how the symbols of the Holiest have become gambling dice of the Basest,--must read the narrative...at intervals (there is) the growl of Chapel Organs, like prayer by machinery: proclaiming, as in a kind of horrid, diabolic horse-laughter, Vanity of vanities, all is Vanity".² Carlyle was vigorous in his anti-Catholicism; anything related to it which came within range, was withered with the fire of his invective. Cardinal Newman, he once said, did not have the intellect of a moderate sized rabbit. Froude relates a humorous anecdote about a certain individual's unsuccessful attempt to arouse Carlyle's interest in the completion of the cathedral at

1. Vol. 1, p.9.

2. Ibid., p.18.

Cologne, showing him the plans, etc. Silent until he was forced to speak, Carlyle finally blurted out, "It is a very fine pagoda if ye could get any sort of a God to put in it!"¹.

Toward the Anglican "pagoda", Carlyle was almost as severe in his criticism. It was aroused by the imputed insincerity of many church-people, preachers and parishioners alike, whose shams were made obvious by the discrepancy between their profession and practice. Carlyle was fearful that the religion of the Established Church had become a "worship of formulas", which he thought of as being no less than immoral and blasphemous. It seemed to him that the "Christians" of his day were spending all their efforts toward "standing well with philosophy, and not ill with Nero". At times Carlyle's sarcasm could be scathing in its effect; even his journals are not free of it. Evidently he had been reading among the classical authors before the recording of the following note on August 11, 1832; "Seneca was born to be of the Church of England. He is the father of all that work in sentimentality and...study to serve God and Mammon...this force had mostly oozed out of him, or 'corrupted itself into benevolence, virtue, sensibility'."²

The claim for authority which the Anglicans frequently put forth aroused an intense antagonism on Carlyle's part. "The Church of England stood long upon her tithes and her decencies", he wrote to Sterling in 1840, "but now she takes to shouting in the market-place, 'My tithes are nothing, my decencies are nothing; I am either miraculous celestial or else nothing'. It is to me

1. Froude, iv, p. 112.

2. Froude, ii, pp. 308, 9.

the fatallest symptom of speedy change she ever exhibited. What an alternative! Men will soon see whether you are miraculous celestial or not. Were a pair of breeches ever known to beget a son?"

There were many times when Carlyle was sorely tempted to lead what he referred to as an "Exodus from Houndsditch", that is, a fierce onslaught against the false beliefs, the hypocrisies, and shams which, to his mind, characterized so much of contemporary religion. As often as he was tried, he stifled the impulse, spending his anger in his journals. "Why, then", Froude writes, "did he find it impossible to speak plainly on this momentous subject? Because, as he had said of the poor priests at Bruges, because, false as they were, there was nothing to take their places if they were cast out but the Gospel of Progress, which was falser even than they. God Himself would in due time build a new temple for Himself above the ruins of the old beliefs. He Himself, meanwhile would do ill to wound simple hearts like that of his poor old mother. His resolution was often hardly tested. Often he would exclaim fiercely against 'detestable idolatries'. Often, on the appearance of some more than usually insincere episcopal manifesto, he would wish the Bishops and all their works dead as Etruscan soothsayers. But the other mood was the more prevalent. He spoke to me once with loathing of Renan's 'Vie de Jesus'. I asked if he thought a true life could be written. He said, 'Yes, certainly, if it were right to do it, but it is not'".

There is no doubt that Carlyle suffered some considerable

conflict over this problem. On one hand, he could hardly restrain himself in the face of what he deemed to be open falsehood. On the other, he recognized in himself a violence of feeling which approached the most intolerant prejudice. "He who would understand England must understand her Church", he admitted in his Craigenputtock diary, February, 1829,"--for that is half of the whole matter. Am I not conscious of a prejudice on that side? Does not the very sight of a shovel hat in some degree indispose me to the wearer thereof? Shut up my heart against him? This must be looked into. Without love there is no knowledge". Carlyle was ready at any time to agree that the Church of England was the most respectable body of influence--then in existence, and in the end, he thought it would remain a little while longer, if those within it did not abuse it too much. "Your rusty Kettle", he said, "will continue to boil your water for you if you don't try to mend it. Begin tinkering and there is an end of your Kettle".¹ So long as men could be found who believed sincerely in the Prayer-book, Carlyle had no wish to precipitate an "Exodus". He disliked the liberal school of clergy because they were admitting their insincerity in the teaching of the traditional beliefs. Once hypocrisy set in, it were better to have no religion at all.

The question is inevitable; was Carlyle a Christian? It seems self-evident that anyone who had as deep an understanding (however loose his interpretation) as Carlyle himself, must answer in the affirmative. To believe in the exclusive divinity of

1. Froude, J.A., Thomas Carlyle, A History of his Life in London, Volume II, page 385.

Christ alone (which with many orthodox people is the chief requirement of a Christian) without a knowledge and confidence in the deepest truths of the Christian religion, would be the equivalent of irreligion. Carlyle we have seen was neither orthodox in his belief nor active in his church attendance, but I am confident in affirming that he was a better Christian than many who satisfy those requirements. Deeply conscious as he was of the superior and supernatural insight of Jesus, Carlyle has every right to the title which the Bishop of Oxford gave to him--"a most eminently religious man".

CHAPTER NINE.

FOUR STRAINS OF CARLYLE'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT: A SUMMARY.

"The actual True is the sum of all these; not any one of them by itself constitutes what of Human Nature is hitherto developed".

(Heroes and Hero-Worship, p. 41.)

The remark of his wife that Carlyle was not one man but many men, applies with special appositiveness to his religious thought. His mind was too eclectic to submit to any easy clarification by critics. He was not himself troubled by the contradictions which brought the various strains of his thought into fundamental conflict. Though he was passionately devoted to truth, he abhorred sectarianism or any rigid confinement of truth to any one philosophical system or mode of belief. Indeed, to acquire a "pure" position was his last concern. Of the strains which we must analyze in this chapter--Stoicism, Idealism, Mysticism, and Calvinism--there was only one, adherence to which he expressly avowed. That was mysticism. From Hoddam Hill to the French Revolution (1825-1837), he frequently called himself a "mystic", but even then he did not meet the spiritual qualifications usually associated with that loosely defined term, and certainly after 1837, he shows less and less of the "mystic temperament". We must proceed now to the analysis of these four strains in Carlyle's religious thought.

STOICISM.

The spirit of detachment, of self-protective indifference (apatheia) to external things, which distinguishes Stoicism, is so much the opposite of Carlyle's existential involvement in the

issues of life that it would seem at the outset ridiculous to trace any great share of his thought to Stoic religion and ethics. If there is anything in Carlyle, it is passion. He passionately abhorred evil, he preached righteousness passionately, he sorrowed over his dead wife with passion, and not as the truer Stoic Goethe, who did not leave his literary work for a day when his son died. The desire to achieve peace and tranquillity of spirit hardly appears in his thought. An emotional approach to truth made it impossible for him to appreciate any purely speculative rational process. He seems at every point involved, rather than detached.

Nevertheless, there are so many elements in his ethics and religious thought which suggest, if not the spirit, the doctrine of Stoicism, that it is necessary to consider the parallels and come to some conclusion in regard to the question, Was Carlyle a Stoic? This is made especially necessary by the affirmative answer given to this question by some critics,¹ frequently, it is suspected, as a result of a kind of fallacious critical process of elimination: if a thinker is not a Christian and yet adheres to a lofty ethical ideal, achieves victory over suffering, and believes in the providence of God, he must be a Stoic.

In chapter three² we considered the passages which seem to show that Carlyle, for a certain short period, found a great

1. E.g., H.D. Traill, in the introduction to Sartor, (Centenary Edition).
2. See *supra*, pp. 74-7.

deal of solace in the Stoic exhortations to courage, self-discipline, and resignation to suffering. It was at that time when his physical suffering was beginning, when uncertainty about the future was most distressing. The one direct quotation from Epictetus which he gives us has to do with resignation. "It is the way of an uninstructed man to blame others for what falls out ill for him; of one beginning to be instructed to blame himself, but of one well-instructed to blame neither another nor himself".¹ Unquestionably, resignation, or the achievement of immunity from the devastating effect upon the soul of misfortune, which is the Stoic aim, strongly attracted Carlyle, as it does any thinker striving for spiritual independence from life's vicissitudes. We have seen in chapter four how the attitude toward suffering is Carlyle's primary concern, as opposed to the pursuit of happiness. As an anti-hedonist, Carlyle stood against the philosophy of the utilitarians much as the first Stoics stood against the Epicureans.

Admiration for the virtue of resignation led Carlyle frequently to praise the Book of Job as the greatest book of the Bible. In all probability, this great drama of human suffering, and its religious resolution in pious submission--which is a better virtue than mere resignation--had a more profound effect upon Carlyle than all the brave utterances of Epictetus or Marcus Aurelius. Job's final resignation is of a higher order than the Stoic's. It involves submission to an omnipotent

1. Encheiridion, c. v. See *supra*, p. 75.

personal God, towards Whom Job's faith reaches out over the mystery of adversity. Stoic resignation is not an act of faith so much as a magnificent patience in face of the unfavorable operations of Necessity--the immanent, impersonal Force, or Reason, which pervades the universe.

But if Job is a step beyond Stoicism, the New Testament is a step beyond Job. It advances beyond mere endurance, beyond even pious submission, to the supreme insight of the Cross, the highest symbol of the positive use of suffering, the paradoxical instrument of the Divine Love. The New Testament teaches a God who chastises whom He loves, and enjoins men to take up their own crosses, to subdue their clamor for rights and happiness by the denial of self, to become "perfect through suffering". This, and not Stoicism, is the spiritual atmosphere in which Carlyle is moving whenever he speaks of the "Worship of Sorrow". It is perhaps at this point that Carlyle approaches more nearly than at any other to the peculiar spirit of Christianity. Christ is not only the "supreme hero" but the Great Sufferer. "Small is it that thou canst trample the Earth with its injuries under thy feet, as old Greek Zeno trained thee; thou canst love the Earth while it injures thee, and even because it injures thee; for this a Greater than Zeno was needed, and he too was sent".¹

Another aspect of Stoicism which doubtless attracted Carlyle was its attempt to eliminate desire and so avoid the disturbance

1. Sartor, p. 154.

of frustration. "Let us want one thing", says the Stoic, "the state of mind that wants nothing". This state of mind was called *ἀρετή*. "Love that only which happens to thee", wrote Marcus Aurelius. Epictetus recommended to his pupils that they should not require things to happen as they wished. The conquest of Teufelsdröckh over desire does seem to be described in Stoic terms. "Make thy claim of wages zero, then; thou hast the world under thy feet."¹ But this is as far as Carlyle goes. There is no reason to think that the Stoic aim to achieve freedom from desire was the exclusive or even the main influence at work here. Carlyle does not go into the question which plagued the Stoic philosophers, i.e., if man is liberated from desire, what will motivate him to action? He did not draw the imaginary distinction between desiring and preferring without desiring. Indeed, it is only in a limited sense that Carlyle abjures desire, i.e., in his condemnation of the love of pleasure and the selfish pursuit of happiness. It is hedonistic desire only which he repudiates. The desire for the good, for justice, for truth, certainly called forth all the passion of his being.

Finally, in Carlyle's emphasis upon the natural law, we see what may be interpreted as Stoic doctrine. Stoic religion is fundamentally immanentist and pantheistic, and stresses the identity of human reason with the Divine Reason, or Fire, which surrounds and pervades the universe. This Reason is at once the law of universal nature and the law of human nature, and the

1. Ibid., p. 153.

Stoic literature is full of exhortations to men to place themselves in harmony with this law of the world and of themselves. The neophyte is informed that he must become a "philosopher"; he must learn to love wisdom, to be a reasonable being. Stoic religion is essentially a rational religion.

Carlyle shows strong affinities to Stoicism in the language he uses to recall men to their duties. He constantly reminds them of the laws which remain unchangeable in the order of the universe, and emphasizes that they are known, not by special revelation, but naturally, by the human soul, because of its share in universal reason. "(Religion's)Laws, written, if not on stone tables, yet on the Azure of Infinitude, in the inner heart of God's Creation, certain as Life, certain as Death! I say the Laws are there, and thou shalt not disobey them"¹ In the same passage, he stresses the rational maturity of man, who no longer needs "Sinai Thunder", but understands the laws of God in his own "god-created soul". Carlyle is certainly the proponent of a rational morality of the Stoic stamp, whether it is specifically Stoic in origin or not. Man's highest moral possibility is the doing of his duty, the obedience of the law, which Emil Brunner emphatically distinguishes from specifically Christian morality. "Rational morality can create only people who are governed by 'duty', but not those who are controlled by love".² Although there are many passages in his writings which exalt the place of love,³ and certainly many more which are

1. Past and Present, p. 230.

2. Reason and Revelation, trans. by Wyon, London, 1947. p.331.

3. E.g., The French Revolution, iii, p. 315, Sartor, p. 115.

full of tenderness toward humanity, it cannot be said that love is at the root of Carlyle's ethics. For an ethic of love is based upon grateful response to a loving and merciful God. Carlyle's ethic, in contrast, is based upon obedience to a stern, justice-demanding God. Man's attitude to Him is not so much that of a free, loving response, as it is recognition of the inescapable duty to obey.¹

One of the most conspicuous aspects of Stoicism's stress upon natural law and the divine Reason was the doctrine of *προνοία*, with which the word "providence" through the latin translation of "foresight", was introduced into philosophical and theological history. Stoicism in the ancient world, was in violent reaction against the idea promulgated by the Sophists that all things are subject to blind chance. It insisted upon "Fate" (*εἰμαρμένη*) or destiny, predestination, and allowed no room for "Fortune" or chance. This was the natural outcome of the belief that the universe was governed by purposive Reason.

The congeniality between this side of Stoic thought and Calvinism is obvious. It is not accidental, since Calvin himself was an earnest student of the Stoic philosophers, and came to lay a great stress upon the providence of God and the predestination of man.² We have seen how the idea of providence influences Carlyle's treatment of history. It is virtually equated, as it was by the Stoics, with the natural law, the constancy and givenness of which Carlyle as a historian sees as

1. Thus it is necessary to take issue with Ralli (op.cit., i, p. 341), who says that "the impelling force was love" in Carlyle's social ethic. It is more "justice", and "prophetic indignation".
2. This is pointed out by A.M. Hunter: Calvin's "early sympathy with the principles of Stoicism...disposed him to see in the sovereign will of God the reason for things being exactly as they are". (The Teaching of Calvin, Glasgow, 1920, p. 46).

the foundation rock of all good acts and the stone of stumbling of all evil deeds. There is no place in Carlyle's historical interpretation for mere chance. The order and rationality of the historical process lead him to present history in terms of "relatedness", or moral cause and effect, though at the same time, he does not deny the spontaneity of human freedom.

In one respect, Carlyle is certainly more a Stoic than a Calvinist. That is in his tendency to speak of God as impersonal moral force. "The great soul of the world is just", was a favorite axiom on his lips; its interest for him was in its last word. Himself recalling the frequent insistence of Sterling upon a personal God, he lamely attributes his refusal to discuss the topic to a delicate reticence.¹ Actually, Carlyle did not hold any firm and consistent belief in the Person of God; the occasional references to Him as person, the ejaculatory prayers in his journal, are for the most part figurative. No doubt his reticence on this point was due to a conviction that belief in a personal God meant belief in a divine "individual", which seemed both anthropomorphic, and contradictory to the belief in the divine omnipresence.

The Stoics, and Carlyle with them, had a theology, but, if we must speak properly, they did not have a religion, which involves the communion of man with God in a personal relationship, by acts of worship and acts of prayer. It is no more accidental that there is no place for prayer in Carlyle's thought than that the Stoics did not practise it, for prayer

1. Life of Sterling, p. 123.

takes place only under the aegis of belief in the Person of God, who is capable of being addressed, of hearing and answering prayer.¹

In formulating our conclusion as to the amount of Stoic influence upon Carlyle's religious thought, we must note the affinities of Stoicism with Calvinism (and Christianity in general) on many points, not only that of providence. In ethics, the Stoic exhortations against the accumulation of wealth, and the indulgence of the flesh seem hardly less rigorous than the same warnings from Christian thinkers. In the history of western thought, Stoicism has had a tremendous role to play in complementing the Christian tradition, and it is hardly possible to separate the strain of its influence from that of Christianity, in any one thinker, least of all Carlyle. Then, too, in his case, the tenets of Stoicism were mediated in a peculiar way through the theology and practice of Calvinism. All of Carlyle'sso-called "Stoic" characteristics may be much

1. It is true that Carlyle often speaks of worship, but this too is figurative as a form of wonder. Indeed worship is defined as "infinite admiration". Just as, by the idea of "natural supernaturalism", Carlyle wished to spread an attitude of wonder over all existence, to make all things miraculous, so worship is conceived in a universal sense--everything man does is worship. (Past and Present, p.236). This "diffused piety" is infinitely to be preferred above impiety, but it is in the last analysis a misguided "religiosity". It does not satisfy the human need for the concrete, which, in other respects, Carlyle appreciated well enough. Universal worship is the destruction of particular worship, in the same sense that universal hero-worship is the destruction of the particular revelation in Christ. It is ultimately destructive of itself as well. As disillusion inevitably follows hero-worship, meaninglessness follows in the wake of the belief that everything man does is worship.

more convincingly accounted for by the religion of his fathers. What he found in the Stoic philosophers, especially the "old Roman virtues" he so frequently praises, only confirmed the ethos of Calvinism. Indeed, resignation, the conquest of inordinate desires, respect of the natural law, and belief in providence are all to be found in Carlyle in forms more suggestive of Calvin than Epictetus. Negatively his position in regard to Stoicism is quite clear. For as the apostle of action, of involvement "in the busy current which is flowing past", he represents the antithesis of Stoicism's cautious detachment. He is too passionate a prophet to share the austere reserve of the Stoic philosopher, which, however noble, is bloodless and centered in the self.

IDEALISM.

In contrast to the other three "strains" in Carlyle's religious thought, idealism is less specifically religious and more philosophical--- a manner of viewing the nature of reality. For that very reason, we may expect to find that Carlyle is only provisionally an idealist. He is not interested in giving us a consistent philosophic world-view. One may safely assert that insofar as he was an idealist thinker, it was in reaction from materialism and utilitarianism. If this is true, we may expect that his "idealism" is dominant only during the heat of this reaction, and so not capable of surviving with the same strength beyond it.

When we examine the course of Carlyle's thought and literary activity over the years, we find that this is actually

the case. After the philosophic poetry of Sartor, in which Carlyle reaches the height of his "idealism"-- or "transcendentalism", which seems a better word, because less philosophic-- the impulse to investigate the ideal world subsides before the stronger impulse to interpret the real world of history. Carlyle becomes a practical realist; his thought becomes descendental.

Of course, strictly speaking, Carlyle had never concerned himself with classical philosophic idealism. Emerson, for one, could not understand the reason for this "blind spot" in Carlyle's intellectual eye which made him oblivious and even hostile to the idealist philosophy of Socrates and Plato.¹ Reading Emerson's essay on Plato in Representative Men, Carlyle had commented that it had done the least for him, though of all the essays it was admired the most by others. Characteristically, the personal reference to Socrates' clogs and big ears was the only item of interest striking enough to remain fixed in his memory.² When he himself interpreted the Greek period in his lectures on literature, Carlyle revealed himself to be in solitary opposition to the universal admiration of Socrates, and must have startled his hearers with his dissent from the high estimation in which he had been held by the western world. He called him "the emblem of the decline of the Greeks", and sympathized with Aristophanes' opinion that he was going to destroy Greece with his innovations. Under the influence of his

1. See Correspondence, i, pp. 5, 22.

2. Ibid., ii, p. 188.

determination to praise the pre-Socratic period of pagan religion as an age of sincere belief as yet undisturbed by scepticism, Carlyle was betrayed into an unfavorable judgment of the period introduced by Socrates as a time of unprofitable speculation. He criticizes Socrates for his "wire-drawn notion about virtue". It was perhaps natural for Carlyle, "prophet" that he was, to have more sympathy with the oracles of Delphi than for the sober, rational method of Socratic inquiry. "There is no conclusion in him", he said, "there is no word of life in Socrates".¹ In comparison, we might observe that the prophetic, oracular utterance is all conclusion and no inquiry: to Carlyle, "Thus saith the Lord" conveys more truth than the Socratic dialectic. When asked of his opinion of Plato by Allingham, he replied, "Plato has not been of much use to me; a high, refined man: 'Odi profanum vulgus'".² His only favorable comment on Plato was concerned with the aristocratic political theory of The Republic which he apparently discovered relatively late in life, and welcomed as a confirmation of the anti-democratic opinion he had expressed in the Latter-Day Pamphlets.³

The terminology of classical Platonic idealism-- the forms or universal Ideas of the intelligible world-- seems to be very far from Carlyle's mind. The Platonic distinction between being and non-being, nous and matter, the Idea of the Good crowning a hierarchy of ideas, seem not to have influenced Carlyle directly.

1. Pp. 31, 2.

2. Allingham, op.cit., p. 213.

3. Carlyle and Emerson Correspondence, ii, p. 222.

Such abstractions are too refined. Nevertheless, the world-view which they expressed, their hostility toward all types of materialism did come to Carlyle's mind in a very formative way through the new idealism of Kant and more of Fichte. The temporality and mortality of man and nature, the never-ceasing change of the phenomenal world, the dependence of creation upon an invisible, uncreated, and eternal Reality--all these concepts illustrating the instability of earthly existence, which were originally mediated to Carlyle through a Christian atmosphere of concentration upon the "other world"--heaven and the perfect righteousness of an unchangeable God--were confirmed in the Critical Idealism of Germany. The dream-like and illusory character of existence, the "insubstantial pageant" of the life of man who is only an apparition flitting between birth and death, with the eternal stars shining above and the graves beneath, was the spiritual milieu in which Carlyle's poetic mind moved. It was necessary, therefore, for him to find a ground of permanence and changelessness upon which his restless spirit could fix. And this was his discovery in idealist thought: the Reality behind all appearances, the Fichtean Divine Idea at the bottom of appearances, the Kantian noumena, and, most of all, the unshakeable idea of duty which is mediated a priori through the practical reason.¹

1. There is a sense in which Carlyle at times so emphasizes the illusory character of sensory experience that he destroys the tension he wishes to maintain between nature and supernature. Looked at rationally, this would inevitably destroy his doctrines of Wonder and the Miraculous, because man wonders and "miracles happen" only in the context of this tension. It is significant that, in the destruction of the distinction between the Creator and the created world, the Absolute Idealist is as inaccessible to the supernaturalism of Christianity as is the naturalist. Carlyle talked about the miraculous all his life, but it was precisely the miraculous in Christian teaching which alienated him in his youth, and continued repugnant to him in his later years. This seems to prove that the person who believes that "everything is miraculous" is no better able to comprehend the exceptional than he who believes nothing is miraculous.

He had become convinced that "empiricism leads to atheism". Earth-bound sensory phenomena, taken by themselves, appeared as unreliable, leading to the bedlam of relativism. They could not be depended upon as a source of truth. Only eternal Truth, the basis of all temporal truth, could be ultimately satisfactory. This Truth was grasped by the intuitive Reason, a higher faculty than the more prosaic faculty of the Understanding which is confined to sensory phenomena, the relations between real objects, and all purely logical as opposed to spiritual or intuitional inquiry.

Thus we see that Carlyle's debt to Plato should have been more gratefully acknowledged. As we shall see, in the following section, there are very striking affinities between Carlyle's mystic concept of reason and Plato's. Furthermore, the paramount concern with values, the Ideal of the Good, or, in Carlylean terms, "the infinite nature of duty", places him in the direct spiritual descent from Plato. The only qualification we must make is to observe that he is too much a child of the Old Testament to share in the Platonic preoccupation with the identification of the Idea of Beauty with the Idea of the Good. Unlike Goethe who continued this preoccupation in his aestheticism (at this one point, Carlyle was suspicious of his Master),¹

1. A study of the aesthetic side of Carlyle's mind would show a singular insensitivity to the beauty of form, whether expressed in poetry (in spite of his imaginative powers, his attempts at poetry were failures), music or painting. "One is tired to death", he complains, with his (Schiller's) and Goethe's palabra about the nature of the fine arts". (Two Notebooks, p. 41) There is only one beauty for Carlyle: the beauty of truth. In this respect, he is far from a typical romantic. The intellectualism of Calvinism retains the upper hand.

Carlyle stressed the good exclusively, though of course in a quite unPlatonic and more prophetic way, through obedience to law, rather than philosophia, or speculative love of the Good.

It is perceived how much Carlyle's acceptance of the idealist perspective was a reaction from empiricism when we recall how ill at ease he was in the presence of any abstract idealist thought. He cannot survive in the rarefied atmosphere of philosophy which is divorced from the real world. While he retained his belief in the primary reality of the unseen world, it was its manifestation in the visible world which engaged his attention. It is the concrete representation of the ideal in the symbol which is all-important, not the ideal abstracted from the real. As a prose-poet, he embodies general truths in concrete images; as a historian, he describes the operations of the invisible world of moral law in factual events. It is the belief in die Einheit des Realen und Idealen¹ which urges him to look for the ideal 'in the real and nowhere else. "The actual, well seen, is the ideal", he reminds Emerson by way of warning him against flying too high in the stratosphere of transcendentalism.²

This concise motto, containing Carlyle's whole working credo, was not a reversion from idealism to positivism. Had this been the case, he would have said, "The actual is all that exists", and instead of dealing with symbols, he would have had, as an historian, only isolated events, divested of significance,

1. See supra, p. 181.

2. Correspondence, 1, p. 314.

to show us. David Masson, in attempting the difficult task of describing this unique kind of idealism, hit upon a helpful distinction. He differentiates what he chooses to call "Idealistic Transcendentalism and Realistic Transcendentalism". "By (the) idealistic theory all the apparent universe of known external realities...is resolved or reduced into mere present thinkings of your mind..." We might correct this by saying that there are other types of idealism besides this purely subjective variety. But he goes on to observe, "Now though Carlyle was acquainted with this idealistic theory, had evident likings for it, and now and then favoured it with a passing glance of exposition, I cannot find that he had ever worked out the theory in all its bearings... He remained to the end what may be called a Realistic Transcendentalist".¹ It is this last sentence which is enlightening, though it may seem illegitimate to combine realism and transcendentalism in one label. Illegitimate or not, the combination does require to be made, if we are to understand Carlyle. For his working medium is the real world. In him we see that idealism may take a very different road from that leading to universal truths and abstract philosophy. It may take a descendental course instead of transcending the actual world, and thus bring these universal truths down into the earthly arena of particular symbolic phenomena. Carlyle never tires of telling us that the Divine Reality is revealed only through particular men and particular movements of men, in the

1. Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, pp. 71ff.

individual incidents and counter-incidents in the dynamic course of history, in the inexorable, exact operations of Providence.

This "realistic transcendentalism", "descendentalism", or whatever we wish to call it, was a healthy corrective to the abstractions of Fichtean Absolute Idealism, in which the attempt was made to describe historical process as the evolution of the Divine Ego. Real events resist subjection to idealist patterns or philosophies of history, and apparently Carlyle, more from instinct than reflection, understood that there was a reason for the givenness and intractability of the stuff of history. "Facts" are of God's own making. They are as they are, for God's own good reasons. They are the primary elements in any study of His revelation. The recognition of this truth Carlyle felt to be prerequisite to the understanding of both the Divine Reality behind appearances and the appearances that symbolize the Reality. As Emil Brunner has observed, "Every attempt to derive the historical...from a system of timeless truths and a system of truths which is independent of the historical--as was done by all the great German Idealists--falsifies its substance."¹ The belief in the significance of the created world because it proceeds from the purposeful fiat of God, which underlies this statement by a Biblical theologian, is also at the root of Carlyle's most unidealistic insistence upon the pre-eminence of facts. His position is really that of a Christian realist, for in both his historical theory and practice we see the antithesis of idealism's view of the body as either non-being or essentially evil. The

1. Man in Revolt, London, 1939, p. 49.

The Biblical emphasis upon the positive, meaningful character of history, and God's dynamic role therein, had been the fundamental influence upon Carlyle, severely qualifying any "idealism" we might be tempted to attribute to him.

The treatment of the historic event, or the "fact", as a symbol, might well be the test by which any thinker, especially any historian, could be discovered as materialist, idealist, or Christian realist. For an interest in the symbol shows a healthy meeting of the ideal world with the material world. Neither the pure idealist nor the pure materialist can be interested in symbol. The former is placed "above" the symbol by his abhorrence of all concretion or particularity. The latter finds himself "below" the symbol; positivism sees everything as particularity and nothing as spiritually significant or symbolic. The symbol as a characteristic category belongs to Christian realism, for it embraces in unity God and the world, the divine and the human. The symbol is the Incarnation, "the Word made flesh", forever opposed to both the "idealist Word" abstracted from the flesh and the "materialist flesh" divorced from the Word. Inseparable from this highest divine symbol is man's highest symbolic act, the eucharist, the ceremonial version of the Incarnation. Here the most common earthly elements of bodily nourishment are the vehicles for the holiest elements of spiritual life, the Divine Love and the Divine Mercy. If it is objected that this is irrelevant to Carlyle's symbolism on the ground that he had belief in neither of the Christian prototypes of symbol, it must be remembered that Carlyle simply ex-

tended them to embrace both belief in a repeated incarnation of the divine in many great men, and a type of sacramental attitude toward all reality. The Christian cannot share his rejection of the particular Christian symbols, but he must acknowledge the Christian sources of his universal symbols. While partaking of much of the spirit of idealism, Carlyle, because he is chiefly a religious historian, must, in the last analysis, be described as a Christian realist.

MYSTICISM.

The usual indefinableness of Carlyle's religious thought has added to it a second difficulty for the interpreter when he considers a third "strain", that of mysticism. This is the indefinableness of mysticism itself, a quality which proceeds necessarily from the typical mystic's revulsion from precise and consistent intellectual formulations of religious belief or experience. This, however, results in a frequent misuse of the term in an entirely negative way. According to this misuse, mysticism is concerned with something that is inaccessible to empirical investigation. The mystic is one whose mind daringly ventures beyond the limits of ^{the} commonly known. This negative definition approaches utter meaninglessness when it comes to stand for the same undefined content as is accepted for the word "spiritual" in common parlance today, i.e., anything psychological, sociological, philosophical, or religious which suggests more than a reference to purely physical matter. Obviously, if our inquiry has no more limits than this, if

Carlyle is to be pronounced a mystic because he is a "spiritual thinker", we shall be none the wiser! In the "State of German Literature" (1827), Carlyle himself criticized this loose usage. "Mysticism is a word in the mouths of all: yet, of the hundred, perhaps not one has ever asked himself what this opprobrious epithet properly signified in his mind; or where the boundary between true science and this Land of Chimeras was to be laid down. Examined strictly, mystical, in most cases, will turn out to be merely synonymous with not understood."¹ He ridiculed the English empiricist critics who were applying the epithet not only to Jacob Böhme, or Novalis, but also to Kant, Fichte and Schelling.² When philosophers who labor to give precise, rational articulation to their concepts are summarily disposed of as "mystics" then the only conclusion is that their critics have expended very little labor to understand them.

Our assignment or non-assignment of Carlyle to the class of mystics will convey meaning only if we first present a definition of mysticism which contains some distinct qualities that are more or less generally recognized as characteristic by both mystical and non-mystical thinkers. These qualities may be listed as follows. (1) In religious practice, the mystic is contemplative, achieving through "quietism" (which is not passivity) an intensity of spirit that is capable of perceiving the divine nature as other men cannot-- this is the "mystic" way. (2) This intensity is introspective because of the mystic's

fundamental belief in the continuity and even identity of the divine nature and human nature,--the mystic is an immanentist, hostile to all radical forms of divine transcendence. (3) The aim of the mystic is self-annihilation and self-absorption into the All-- this is redemption, the escape from individuality. (4) The expression of the mystic is frequently negative; God is described in terms of what He is not--the mystic yearns for an ineffable world beyond human reason or sense. He therefore finds it difficult, and sometimes undesirable, to communicate to others what he has discovered on his religious pilgrimage.

There are no two mystics or anti-mystics who would consent to this list without qualifications and additions. It is admittedly arbitrary, but only by such an arbitrary selection can we make any fruitful interpretation of Carlyle's "mysticism".

In the first place, nothing seems further from Carlyle than the contemplative "mystic way". The intensity of the inward gaze which so frequently flowers into visionary experience, is, on the contrary, remote from his mental habits. His activism leads him in Sartor to expressly disavow one of the mystic's main principles, "Know thyself", in favor of the more extrovertive obligation, "Know what thou canst work at". It is true that Carlyle had what may be called "religious experiences" when the immensity and godlike character of nature softened and

humbled him and placed him in a mood of wonder and worship.¹

But these were not visionary experiences. There was never anything of the occult about them, as when George Fox saw the blood of Christ. He did exhibit a certain curiosity in regard to the visions of mystics because he recognized in them something that might have deeper meanings, even though in defiance of reason, than those contained in the limited insights gained by an arid rationalism which is horrified by anything abnormal or "unreasonable". As a romantic, he took pleasure in the visionary writing of Richter in his "Dreams" and gives us in his second essay on Richter what is one of his ^{most} successful translations, the remarkable dream of the dead Christ and the Fatherless universe.²

Reading Novalis, he strives with might and main to penetrate into the core of his symbolism, but without much success. He professes admiration for the "wonderful depth and originality" of Novalis' mind, but in the end admits that his "nature or habit (is) so abstruse, and altogether different from anything we ourselves have notice or experience of, that to penetrate fairly into its essential character, much more to picture it forth in visual distinctness, would be an extremely difficult task."³

1. E.g., The letter to his brother John (1838): "Last night I sat down to smoke in my night-shirt in the backyard. It was one of the beautifullest nights: the half-moon clear as silver looked out as from eternity, and the great dawn was streaming up. I felt a remorse, a kind of shudder, at the fuss I was making about a sleepless night, about my sorrow at all, with a life so soon to be absorbed into the great mystery above and around me. Oh! let us be patient. Let us call to God with our silent hearts, if we cannot with our tongues".
2. Essays, ii, pp. 155-8.
3. Ibid., p. 21.

No more can be said than that Carlyle refused to take a stand with the shallow critics who merely disposed of the experiences of the mystics as perverse irrationalism. It may be that his early friendship with Henry Duncan who became a Quaker had cancelled out a natural suspicion which, as the son of a Scotch Calvinist, he might have entertained toward Britain's chief mystic, George Fox. One of Sartor's most eloquent chapters is in praise of Fox, "one of those, to whom, under ruder or purer form, the Divine Idea of the Universe is pleased to manifest itself; and, cross all the hulls of Ignorance and earthly degradation, shine through, in unspeakable Awfulness, unspeakable Beauty, on their souls: who therefore are rightly accounted Prophets, God-possessed..."¹ Of Fox's extraordinary religious experiences, he keeps silence. He apparently recognizes that no critic has the right to reject them as mere signs of insanity. On the contrary, they are indicative of a spiritual depth that is enviable, whatever form it takes. Thus, in speaking to a contemporary Quaker of Jacob Böhme, he revealed his own personal non-mystical temper, and, at the same time, his readiness to acknowledge something great, though rationally inexplicable in the mystics. "I could never follow him (Böhme) in his books; it is the most distracted style of writing possible. His first vision was of a bright light stretching all across the road, which turned out to be an angel, who communicated with him ever

1. P. 166.

after. George Fox and Novalis, and many others, were among his followers-- for there's a deep truth in him after all".¹

Even though Carlyle has no personal congeniality with the visionary side of mysticism, his stress upon the symbol suggests an affinity with what is usually thought of as a predominant characteristic of the mystics. One writer on symbolism asserts, "In reality if mysticism is to be defined in terms other than those of personal experience, that spirit is called mystical which employs insight symbols. All devotional mystics have used them, and furthermore such symbols will account for that elusive flavor of mysticism in the writings of many not definitely numbered among the mystics".² Harrold, who quotes the foregoing in his excellent study of "The Mystical Element in Carlyle (1827-34)", states that "Carlyle's weightiest claim to be called, in certain unmistakable ways, a mystic, lies just here in his profound perception of the nature and value of symbolism".³ We may accept this, providing we see that Carlyle never makes use of recondite symbolism. His writing, it is true, is full of the allusiveness that delights the sophisticated critic as a treasure-hunt delights the child, but the treasures once found have no darkness in them; they do not defy the reason. Basically, however, Carlyle and the mystics are at one in welcoming the symbol as a means of perceiving the spiritual world present in the material world. Carlyle differs from them.

1. Caroline Fox, op.cit., p. 161.

2. H.F. Dunbar, Symbolism in Modern Thought and Its Consummation in 'The Divine Comedy', New Haven, 1929, pp. 22,3.

3. Ibid., p. 469.

only in his unwillingness to employ abstruse symbols; he accepts ordinary phenomena, such as work, or clothes, as expressive symbols, and interprets them in a manner that is not even exclusive to mysticism, since it is a mode of thought belonging to religious realism as such.¹

The real reason for Carlyle's interest in the symbol is founded upon the immanentism which we have described as the second characteristic of mysticism. The mystic believes in the continuity of the divine nature with the natural world and with human nature. Thus mysticism has close ties with pantheism on the one hand, and with idealism on the other. Mysticism, pantheism, idealism, are all in radical opposition to doctrines which lay the emphasis upon the "otherness" or transcendence of God, His separateness from nature, human and otherwise. They are out of sympathy with the essentially Biblical and Christian distinction between the Creator and the created world. It is no accident that all forms of idealist thought view the world as eternal, for a world that is made implies a God who is separate from what He has made, Who is in radical discontinuity with man and nature. Thus Isaiah declares, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord".²

We have seen how, in regard to pantheism, Carlyle did not perceive the contradiction between an exclusive doctrine of the immanence of the Eternal Spirit in an eternal world, and the

1. See supra, pp. 288, 9.

2. Isaiah iv, 8.

transcendence of the Creator over the temporal, created world. He believed in both, and thought the argument between pantheism and theism mere playing with words. It is in his mystical idealism that Carlyle's immanentism appears with less ambiguity. He never tires of asserting the continuity of the human reason with the Divine Reason. Reason is therefore elevated to the position which it has always held with the mystics from Plato onward--as the intuitive faculty for perceiving truth, beauty, and the good. In Carlyle's case, it is the good which it chiefly perceives, and therefore "reason" becomes more and more identified with "conscience". "The evidence to me of God", he wrote, "--and the only evidence, is the feeling I have deep down in the very bottom of my heart, of right, truth, and justice... Whoever looks into himself must be aware that at the center of things is a mysterious Demiurge who is God and who cannot in the least be adequately spoken of in any human words".¹

The language used here is remarkably similar to that used by the mystics, who speak of the inward gaze² and look for God in the center of the self where He is known as the "inner Light" but cannot be spoken of. The speculative reason (which Carlyle called the "Understanding") had no power to apprehend the highest truths. Only the intuitive Reason possesses this faculty, and it is exercised in a characteristically mystic way. "Of final causes, man...knows them...by an infinitely higher (than Logic) light of intuition..."³

1. Quoted by Grierson, Thomas Carlyle, p. 13, n.
2. E.g., the religious introspection of the Quakers, which in religious practice is the antithesis of the Protestant preaching and exposition of the external Word.
3. "Diderot", Essays, iii, p. 232.

Insight and belief come as mysterious events which are not to be rationally explained. Carlyle is as hostile as any mystic to the passion for "explaining" which tempts the rationalist to tread upon sacred ground. Religious faith must be jealously protected against probing analysis. Thus, Teufelsdröckh, when he shakes off scepticism and finds an immanent God who "lives and loves" in nature and in man, calls it the "Beginning of Truths (which) fell mysteriously over my soul".¹ There was no accounting for it. "With me", he wrote to Mill in 1841, "the act of believing gets ever more amazing, indescribable..."² Thus we see that Carlyle is not as much a stranger to the mystic's joy as Harrold would have us believe.³ Religious exaltation is by no means a constant in his life, since he is too much a prophet to forget for very long or very frequently the awful disharmony between God Who is holy and man who is unholy. But the sense of union, which evokes gratitude for peace, harmony, joy, is never claimed to be a constant by any mystic. Its inconstancy in Carlyle, therefore, does not argue as Harrold asserts, "a dissonance in such mysticism as he did profess", any more than in any other mystic. It is an unbalanced view which portrays Carlyle's religion in the unrelieved colors of dark joylessness.

The immanentism which was given its most conspicuous expression in Carlyle's religious idea of the hero is very clearly seen in the pregnant fragment of Novalis', which he quoted frequently. Es giebt nur Einen Tempel in der Welt, und das ist der

1. Sartor, p. 150.

2. Letters to Mill, Sterling and Browning, p. 176.

3. Modern Philology, op.cit., p. 463.

menschliche Körper. Nichts ist heiliger als diese hohe Gestalt.

Das Bücken vor Menschen ist eine Huldigung dieser Offenbarung
im Fleisch. Man berührt den Himmel, wenn man einen Menschenliebe

betastet". ("There is but one Temple in the world, and that Temple is the Body of Man. Nothing is holier than this high Form. Bending before men is a reverence done to this Revelation in the Flesh. We touch Heaven, when we lay our hands on a human Body")¹ Novalis here combines two Biblical allusions: St. Paul's reference to the Christian as "the temple of the Holy Spirit"² and St. John's idea of Christ as the Word made flesh in the prologue to the Gospel,³ thus extending the idea of the incarnation to embrace all men in a universal immanentism. As we have seen, Carlyle accepted this without reservations as what he deemed to be "essential Christianity". Actually, it was a quite characteristic expression of the continuity of the divine and the human in mysticism. It was natural to Novalis, and as natural to Carlyle, who, at this point, is typically mystical.⁴

Another idea from Novalis was that of Selbsttötung, self-killing. This has already been discussed in chapter four,⁵ and

1. Novalis, Schriften, Berlin, 1826, ii, p. 126, and Sartor, pp. 190, 1. Cf. "Novalis", Essays, ii, p. 39.
2. I Cor. iii, 16, 17.
3. Recognized by Carlyle in "Goethe's Works", Essays, ii, p. 390.
4. "What is most significant about Carlyle's attitude toward the pure awareness of self is that for him it leads directly, as it did for Jean Paul, to what he thought was an experience of the divine. Thus while man, as man, may be a mystery to himself, he may yet fall back to pure consciousness of the self and touch the divine. For Carlyle this was something like empirical evidence that man is primarily a finite extension of God". (Harrold, Carlyle and German Thought, p. 199.
5. See *supra*, pp. 124-7.

our conclusion was that Carlyle re-adapted it in terms of the Christian paradox of self-denial to gain the self. This shift of meaning to something like self-discipline, which is certainly very different from the genuine mystic's desire to lose his identity in the "One" or the "All", should warn us that Carlyle does not qualify under what we have described as the third characteristic of the mystic.

It is in regard to the fourth characteristic that Carlyle appears most obviously as a mystical thinker. This has to do with the ineffable nature of God and religious experience-- the "Unutterabilities", in Carlylese. God is usually described by Carlyle with words which are negative, bearing on what He is not: the "Infinite", the "Eternal", the "Unnameable", the "Unfathomable", the "Unchangeable", the "impalpable Inane", "the dark bottomless Abyss", "the abysses of Being", "the silent Immensity and Palace of the Eternal", "the circumambient Void", "the Silence of deep Eternities".¹ Although this appears to be of the very essence of mystical language, it does not reflect anything like the Pauline experience of being "caught up into paradise" where one has "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter".² It appears rather to be the consequence of two things: (1) a reaction from the too "familiar" handling of the Divine Names and nature in the theology of Scotch Calvinism (with its Longer and

1. See The French Revolution, ii, p. 65, Sartor, pp. 58, 143, 144, "Richter", Essays, i, p. 14, etc.

2. II Cor. xii.4.

Shorter Catechisms). Carlyle was "a Calvinist without the theology"¹ with a vengeance, avoiding it like the plague, since it had been a main topic of conversation and sometimes of acrimonious debate in his native surroundings. (2) An acceptance of the Goethean view that there is something blasphemous about systematic theology. "Wer darf Ihn nennen?" answers Faust when Margarete questions him about his belief in God.²

"Who dares to name Him?" or "Who dares to chart His path?" was the answer which Carlyle consistently gave to resolve any theological disputation. He was, in his own mind, so impressed by the obvious evidence for God's presence and righteousness, made crystal clear by direct intuition, that all theological argument, which circles around the field without landing, seemed a sacrilege.³ We have noted how he responded to the proofs for the existence of God.⁴ The church seemed to him to be engaged in irrelevant discussions.⁵ "Theologies, rubrics, surplices, church-articles, and this enormous ever-repeated thrashing of the straw?" he explodes in the Life of Sterling. "A world of rotten straw; thrashed all into powder; filling the Universe and blotting out the stars and worlds: -- Heaven pity you with such a thrashing-floor for world, and its draggled ^{ir}deity farthing-candle for sun! There is surely other worship possible for the heart of man; there should be other work, or none at all, for the intellect and creative faculty

1. Italics mine.

2. Act IV, sc. v.

3. It is belief that lies behind Carlyle's silence, not scepticism, as Harrold (against his own interpretation) asserts. (Carlyle and German Thought, p. 198). Scepticism means the withholding of personal belief as well as doubting all other forms of belief, and of this we cannot accuse Carlyle.

4. See *supra*, p. 154.

5. Latter-Day Pamphlets, pp. 29, 161, 288.

of man!--"1 It is amusing to see how his "archaism" makes him acquiesce quite without complaint to the disputation of the greatest theological century of all, the 17th.² That century was an age of belief, but his own was not! He was quite blind to the pressing need for theological reconstruction after the ravages of the "Enlightenment", and the destruction of the infallible authority of the Bible by historical criticism and scientific discovery. The honest efforts which Maurice and, in its own way, the Oxford Movement, were making toward this reconstruction were labelled as insincere or helplessly impractical.

This antipathy to theology was a part of his doctrine of silence which again shows his affinity to the mystics whose ineffable religious experience warns them against attempting to describe the indescribable. "'Religion'," he wrote in his journal in 1870, "this, too, God be thanked, I perceive to be again possible, to be again here, for whoever will piously struggle upwards, and sacredly, sorrowfully refuse to speak lies, which indeed will mostly mean refuse to speak at all on that topic. In no time or epoch can the Highest be spoken of in words--not in many words, I think, ever. But it can even now be silently beheld, and even adored by whoever has eyes and adoration, i.e., reverence in him".³

1. P. 140.

2. Thus, commenting on James I of England, Carlyle writes on how he "piques himself on his knowledge of theology: which certainly, as the vital secret of this Universe, God and the Maker's method of making and ruling this Universe, must be the thing of all others worth knowing by an accomplished mind" (Historical Sketches, p. 27). See Cromwell, passim.

3. Froude, iv, p. 335.

This fundamentally mystical preference of silence to all intellectual expressions of religion was extended by Carlyle to ethical life, probably in response to a suggestive passage from Wilhelm Meister. "...It is but a part of art that can be taught: the artist needs it all. Who knows it half, speaks much, and is always wrong; who knows wholly, inclines to act, and speaks seldom or late. The former have no secrets and no force; the instruction they can give is like baked bread, savoury and satisfying for a single day; but flour cannot be sown and seed-corn ought not to be ground. Words are good, but they are not the best. The best is not to be explained by words. The spirit in which we act is the highest matter. Action can be understood and again represented by the spirit alone,..."¹ Carlyle's version of this doctrine of silence became a main theme in his writings. He opposes the Do-er to the Talker. Talking dissipates the motives for activity. The man who speaks copiously of his intentions is likely to rest satisfied with his eloquence.² Carlyle pressed this thought even further, fulminating against "incontinence of tongues", endless Parliamentary and newspaper debating,³ until the logic that began with mystic silence ended in the absurdity of doubting the value of the freedom of the press.⁴ At this point, he deserves the ridicule of those who point out the incongruity of a man writing thirty volumes in praise of the Gospel of Silence! Can we imagine the response Carlyle would have

1. Wilhelm Meister (Carlyle's trans.), ii, pp.75,6.

2. Latter-Day Pamphlets, pp. 175, 181, 185, 193.

3. Ibid., p. 209.

4. See Frederick, iii, p. 293; vii, p.292.

given to even one of his own wise rulers suggesting he confine himself to, say, fifteen volumes, to say nothing of proposing topics and points of view as is done in Soviet Russia today?

The result of this study is that Carlyle can be called a mystic only with many qualifications. He was more a "mystical thinker", than a mystic, as Harrold expresses it. It is evident, especially in the absence of a "mystic way" of contemplation, in the tendency at times to use the term mysticism in the most general sense, and in the shift of meaning that occurs in his idea of Selbsttödtung, that, as Dean Inge comments, he "is wanting some of the essential features of Mysticism".¹ The view of one of the best of his critics, David Masson, that he was "the reverse of a mystic",² is tempting, but fails to account for the real affinities with mysticism--the continuity of the divine and the human, the intuitive nature of Reason, the language expressing the ineffable character of God, the silence recommended in the presence of the divine. In these respects, it cannot be doubted that Carlyle was on the side of the mystics.

CALVINISM.

It may safely be asserted that there is hardly a leading idea in Carlyle's religious thought which cannot be related in some way to Calvinism. This is so true as to become a serious temptation to the critic to under-estimate the significance of the other strains. An exaggeration on this point might, however, be forgiven in the light of the general neglect of this aspect in

1. W.R. Inge Christian Mysticism, London, 1899, p. 320.

2. Carlyle Personally and in His Writings, pp. 70,1.

favor of the influence of German romantic idealism. This state of affairs has prevailed since Carlyle's own day, doubtless due, in large part, to the prejudicial rejection and consequent misunderstanding of Calvinism, as too stern a religion and too rigorous an ethical ideal.

Carlyle's "Worship of Sorrow" is a typical example of doctrines which can and have been credited to romantic idealism, but which ought more to be accounted for by his early religious training.¹ It has been treated as a case of pure transposition from the doctrines of Goethe. Such a transposition is by no means well considered. "Not for nothing one face, one character, one fact", Emerson wrote in the essay Self-Reliance, "makes such impression on him, and another none. This sculpture in the memory is not without pre-established harmony. The eye was placed where one ray should fall, that it might testify to that particular ray". Carlyle's eye had been placed by Calvinism, and it was because of Calvinism that the particular ray of idealism was registered on its retina. His sympathetic reaction to the "Worship of Sorrow", as to many of the other doctrines of the Germans, did not occur as if he had newly opened an unfamiliar field of thought. The truth must be recognised that his mind had been prepared by early influences, along lines of thinking which are common to the Calvinists. Of all the expressions of the Christian religion, Calvinism is the one which emphasizes to the highest degree the presence of evil and suffering in the world, and the

1. See *supra*, p. 117.

degraded nature of mankind. To many who abhor the thought of looking out upon the mud sloughs from their ivory towers, this view of man is repulsive. Carlyle, however, was born into a family which in its religion proceeded on ^{the} assumption of the existence of original sin in the heart of man, and his paramount need of redemption. With an inherited strain of Calvinism in his own mind, he was ready to accept suffering and to reverence God's chastisement and challenge.¹

We have an interesting excerpt from the journal which Carlyle kept at Craigenputtock, written in February, 1829. "To me there is nothing poetical in Scotland but its religion. Perhaps because I know nothing else so well".² It is doubtful whether Carlyle himself was aware of the full import of these words. Few men have a clear view of the origins of their own thinking, and it is consequently left to the minute detection of biographers and critics to reveal the connections between schools of thought. Froude expresses the relation between Carlyle and Calvinism with consummate understanding: he was "a Calvinist without the theology". At first glance, it may seem ridiculous to speak of someone as a Calvinist, who, of all things, does not have some formal adherence to traditional Calvinist theology. In making the statement, however, Froude was pointing to certain qualities of mind and tend-

1. In a letter to his brother, Aug. 27, 1833, Carlyle wrote, "'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world:' so said the wisest man, when what was his overcoming? Poverty, despite, forsakenness, and the near prospect of an accursed Cross. 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world'. These words on the streets of Edinburgh last winter almost brought tears to my eyes".
2. Froude, ii, p. 73. After the writing of Sartor, John Knox and the Scottish Kirk vied with the French Revolution as a subject for his next book. (Ibid., p. 433).

encies of belief which, when set beside the Calvinist's way of thinking, prove undeniably the truth of his characterization.

We have described the little sect of the "Burghers" to which Carlyle's family belonged. The boy "Tom" was given a thorough religious training, typical of nearly every Scotch family of that period, both in the home and in Mr Johnson's meeting-house. It is essential to understand the significance of these early years, since, as a child, Carlyle's undergirding for the structure of much of his later thinking was formulated. Because he broke away from many specific dogmas of his early religion does not mean that he freed himself completely from its influence. Indeed that could not have been possible.

The creed of the "Burghers", as a result of the centuries-old struggle of the Scottish people for religious freedom and a measure of economic stability, had come to be a spiritual expression of the labor, and suffering which they knew so well. The meagre soil of Scotland forced upon them the hardest realities of life and made their religion expressive of these realities. God was not so much a loving Father showering blessings on his children as the stern Overseer, present everywhere at every moment, judging, rewarding, and punishing each individual soul. Nothing, consequently, was more important in life than for a man to sense his own destiny; knowing that he was being constantly tested by God, he must do his utmost to be looked upon with favor. The only important fact about a man is his moral state.

Time after time, the Ecclefechan minister impressed upon his

parishioners the lesson of divine rewards and divine retribution. If God's commandments were obeyed, it would be well with them; but if they forsook God to follow after the false gods of wealth and indulgence, they would be the victims of divine wrath. Old-fashioned as this kind of preaching would have seemed to England's Nineteenth century "modernists", it was the very essence of what they got when they listened to Carlyle.¹ For Carlyle's fundamental belief - the one which gave the impulse to all his comment on history and his own day - was in a moral universe, whose very pillars were justice, truth, and goodness. It was this attitude of mind which was developed in Carlyle as a result of his early religious environment. Though the outer shell of his creed had been broken, he never forsook its central truth.

In his view of the state of man, Carlyle retained an amazingly pure Calvinistic pessimism in direct opposition to the rising currents of optimism. It was not ultimate pessimism, any more than the theology of Calvin is ultimate pessimism. Ultimately, man possesses an incomparable dignity, because he has been especially fashioned by the Maker and endowed with reason. He is the "image of God" and is therefore distinct from the animal creation. Calvin was rather attracted to Ovid's idea that even

1. Carlyle even retained the idea of the punishment of hell-fire, not less impressive even if "poetic" and associated with the judgments of history. "A friend was arguing on the people's right to decide this or that, and when Carlyle dissented, asked who was to be the judge. Carlyle fiercely answered, 'Hell-fire will be the judge. God Almighty will be the judge, now and always!'" (Froude, iv, p. 389).

the erectness of man's physical body is an outward sign of his spiritual stature.

"...While the mute creation downward bend
Their sight, and to their earthly mother tend,
Man looks aloft, and with erected eyes
Beholds his own hereditary skies".¹

But it was his possession of an innate knowledge of God (though, because of sin, obliterated for all purposes of salvation) which is man's highest dignity. This emphasis upon the original and essential godlike character of man, who is but "a little lower than the angels" - a very important element in Calvin's thought - inspired Carlyle's greatest reverence. His writings are full of eloquence on the greatness of man's spirit. "A soul of something heavenly I do seem to see in every human life, and in my own too, and that is truly and for ever of importance to me", he wrote in 1849.²

But with this, Carlyle practically, views man as a sinner. The breadth of Calvinism is its combination of faith in the ultimate high dignity of man with an unblinking realism in the face of his actual moral and spiritual depravity. Carlyle inherited this dialectic of ultimate optimism, and penultimate pessimism.³ concerning "les grandeurs et les misères de l'homme".

1. Ovid's Metam., bk. 1. (Dryden's translation). See Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, I, xv. 3.

2. Froude, iv, p. 16.

3. He frequently expresses this dialectic in language like the following: "Nothing, or almost nothing, is certain to me, except the Divine Infernal character of this universe I live in, worthy of horror, worthy of worship". (Froude, iii, p. 62).

(Pascal).¹ To Carlyle, man, in the Miltonian phrase, is an "archangel in ruins"--"defaced and obstructed yet glorious man".² The best analysis of this ruination or defacement is, of course, that of Sartor, which emphasizes man's insatiable desire, his egotistic intention to place himself at the center of the universe, to demand an ocean as his drink and then complain that it is not of a better vintage. "Poor miserable sons of Adam" is Carlyle's characteristic exclamation over mankind, mixed of pity and judgment.³ Sometimes the miserableness of man was thought of as folly, and Carlyle would quote Schiller: "Human stupidity (Dummheit) is stronger than the very gods".⁴ Carlyle sermonized like any Calvinist divine over the extraordinary Dummheit of the French people. Why did the "over-celebrated marriage" of the French classes in the "Feast of Pikes" end so soon in divorce? "Partly because it was sworn with such overjoyance, but chiefly, indeed, for an older reason: that Sin had come into the world, and Misery by Sin!"⁵ At the root of the problems of the revolutionaries was the fact that they no longer believed in a God Who was over them and in them. Carlyle is as orthodox as any Christian in his interpretation of sin as primarily faithlessness. It is a religious, not a purely human phenomenon. He shares the piety of the Psalmist: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight".⁶ "There is no longer any God for us!",

1. Pascal's writings are among the most eloquent expressions of this Christian dialectic. "Les grandeurs et les misères de l'homme sont tellement visibles, qu'il faut nécessairement que la véritable religion nous enseigne et qu'il y a quelque grand principe de grandeur en l'homme et qu'il y a une grand principe de misère". (Pensées, ed. by Tourneur, Paris, 1942 Tome i, p.89. (no.141).
2. "Boswell's Life of Johnson", Essays, iii.
3. E.g., Early Letters, ii, p.323.
4. E.g., Frederick, vii, p.181.
5. The French Revolution, ii, p. 68.
6. Ps. li.4.

he cries, in Past and Present, "...This is verily the plague spot; centre of the universal Social Gangrene, threatening all modern things with frightful death. To him that will consider it, here is the stem, with its roots and taproot, with its world-wide upas-boughs and accursed poison-exudations, under which the world lies writhing in atrophy and agony. You touch the focal-centre of all our disease, of our frightful nosology of diseases, when you lay your hand on this. There is no religion; there is no God; man has lost his soul, and vainly seeks antiseptic salt. Vainly; in killing Kings, in passing Reform Bills, in French Revolutions, Manchester Insurrections, is found no remedy. The foul elephantine leprosy, alleviated for an hour, reappears in new force and desperateness next hour".¹

His idea of sin is carried even so far as to share in the classical Christian doctrine of original sin, which he held in opposition to the Rousseauistic belief that goodness was natural to man. "There is one deadly error we commit at our entrance on life", he wrote in 1826, "and sooner or later we must lay it aside, for till then there is neither peace nor rest for us in this world: we all start, I have observed, with the tacit persuasion that, whatever become of others, we (the illustrious all-important we) are entitled of rights to be entirely fortunate, to accumulate all knowledge, beauty, health and earthly felicity in our sacred person, and to pass our most sovereign days in rosy bowers, with distress never seen by us, except as an interesting

1. Pp. 136,7.

shade in the distance of our landscape".¹

This indicates how deeply Carlyle's mind was imbued with the sermons of the Ecclefechan meeting-house. And it is the clue to the pessimism which led him to oppose democracy as unrealistic. Democracy was, for him, the political expression of an unwarranted faith in the goodness of men, who were deemed to be fit to govern themselves. Government, he believed, must fulfil its purpose, that of curbing evil. The sentimental idealization of "the common man" which is inherent in much democratic equalitarianism was simply falsehood.² On the contrary, he believed that the common man was selfish and blind. He is a member of a mob. He is to be helped (that, indeed, is the purpose of government), but this help must come from outside. The common man can be politically saved only by reverent obedience to the "uncommon man", who is qualified for leadership by meeting high personal moral requirements. Only in this way, can the demonic which "lurks in all human things"³ be kept down.

It is this characteristic pessimistic view of man as sinner which is at the root of all Carlyle's political opinions. Fundamentally, he wished to restore the Genevan ideal of theocracy, and it was this which made him a glaring anachronism in the century of liberalism. The government of the universe was a monarchy, a hierarchy, he pointed out. Why should not the government of nations be so? Of course, Carlyle did not mean a literal theocracy, far less a government by priests, but he did think of

1. Quoted by Masson, Edinburgh Sketches, p.329.

2. It was Judas Iscariot slapping the back of Jesus Christ". He vehemently reminded his contemporaries that the "election" of Barabbas was by popular vote! (Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 33.

3. The French Revolution, i, p.39.

heroes as the representatives of God who rule by "divine right",¹ which is granted to the morally outstanding. Hero-worship was his form of theocracy. "Theocracy, Government of God, is precisely the thing to be struggled for! All Prophets, zealous Priests, are there for that purpose. Hildebrand wished a Theocracy; Cromwell wished for, fought for it; Mahomet attained it".² The relation of Carlyle's hero-worship to the Calvinistic doctrine of election is made clearer in the light of the theocratic ideal.³ In Calvinistic terms, it is the "called of God" who are given the mission to uphold order in the government of church and state. "He was always a Calvinist, believing the world divided into the elect and non-elect".⁴ One has only to look at Carlyle's attitude toward the multitude to see that his doctrine of heroes was balanced by a poor opinion of the unheroic masses. "What a set of animals are men and Chilenos!"⁵ These are the "reprobates", divided from the elect, if not by a strictly Calvinist barrier of predestination, by great moral barriers. Carlyle is capable of rising to a sublime level of denunciation as, for instance, in his wrath against the false libelers of Frederick. "They are of the set deserving to be called,--and this not in the way of profane swearing, but of solemn wrath and pity, I say of virtuous anger and inexorable reprobation,--the damned set. For, in very deed, they are doomed and damned, by Nature's oldest Act of Parliament, they, and whatsoever thing they do or say or think;

1. See Latter-Day Pamphlets, p. 130.

2. Heroes, p. 152.

3. "Carlyle's political theory", writes Cassirer, "is, at bottom, nothing short of a disguised and transformed Calvinism. True spontaneity is reserved to the few elect. As to the others, the mass of the reprobates, they have to submit under the will of the elect, the born rulers". (Op.cit., p.193).

4. R.S. Craig, The Making of Carlyle, London, 1908, p. 73.

5. "Dr Francia", Essays, iv, p. 269.

unless they can escape from that devil-element".¹ Such expressions would have been impossible had not the denunciations from the Ecclefechan pulpit continued ringing in his ears. Accompanying this belief that most men were reprobate sinners, was a wistful hankering after the old conviction that there is a Devil.

"The Mythus of Lucifer is one of the wisest ever conceived", he wrote to Mill.²

While he would not enter the lists to debate the endless questions, Carlyle, increasingly as he grew older, found meaning in Calvinism's emphasis upon providence (even "special providence") and the doctrine of predestination (even "double predestination"). Meditating in 1867, about the lonely years at Craigenputtock (when, in spite of the solitude and the struggle, he did his most creative work), he wrote, "'For a Divinity doth shape our ends, rough-hew them as we will!': often in my life, have I been brought to think of this, as probably every considering person is; and, looking before and after, have felt, though reluctant enough to believe in the importance or significance of so infinitesimally small an atom as oneself, that the Doctrine of a Special Providence is in some sort natural to man. All piety points that way, all logic points the other; one has, in one's darkness and limitation, a trembling faith, and can at least say with the Voices, 'Wir heissen euch hoffen',-- if it be the will of the Highest".³

1. Frederick, i, p.171.

2. Letters to Mill, etc., p. 158.

3. Reminiscences, ii, p. 245.

The absolute Sovereignty of God over history, which, in combination with the doctrine of His Eternity¹, is the real source for the belief in predestination, was so much a part of Carlyle's religious thought that it is rather surprising we do not find more references than we do to this typical and much misunderstood doctrine of Calvinism. He was evidently aware of its difficulties, and, above all, aware of the terrible consequences of the application of logical deduction to the Sovereignty of God and the predestination of man, which inevitably ends, if pushed to extremities, in making God culpable for the preconceived damnation of helpless men. Nevertheless, so strong was his belief in the subordination of man to the will of God that he acknowledged the truth of predestination without entering into its logical difficulties. His narrative of the episode of the altercation between Friedrich Wilhelm and his son over the doctrine of predestination is interesting enough to historians of theology since it concerns the controversy between Lutheranism and Calvinism on this issue, even as it reached the level of the royal family. But it is even more interesting as

1. It is Calvin's conception of the everlasting presence of God which is at the root of Carlyle's doctrine of the "everlasting Now", and of his "abolition" of time in the unity of past, present, and future. Idealism only confirmed this. "When we attribute foreknowledge to God, we mean that all things have ever been, and perpetually remain, before His eyes, so that to His knowledge nothing is future or past, but all things are present; and present in such a manner, that He does not merely conceive of them from ideas formed in His mind, as things remembered by us appear present to our minds, but really beholds and sees them as if actually placed before Him." (Institutes, III.xxi. 5).

revelatory of Carlyle's own view. If he expresses it in an "aside", it is only because it was not the place for a more complete defense. "His Majesty understands, on credible information, that Deserter Fritz entertains very heterodox opinions; opinion on Predestination, for one;--which is itself calculated to be the very mother of mischief, in a young mind inclined to evil. The heresy about Predestination, or the 'Freie Gnadenwahl (Election by Free Grace)', as his Majesty terms it, according to which a man is preappointed from all Eternity either to salvation or the opposite (which is Fritz's notion, and indeed is Calvin's, and that of many benighted creatures, this Editor among them), appears to his Majesty an altogether shocking one; nor would the whole Synod of Dort, or Calvin, or St. Augustine in person, aided by a Thirty-Editor power, reconcile his Majesty's practical judgment to such a tenet. What! May not Deserter Fritz say to himself, even now, or in whatever other deeps of sin he may fall into, 'I was foredoomed to it; how could I, or how can I, help it?' The mind of his Majesty shudders, as if looking over the edge of an abyss."¹ If Carlyle's mind did not shudder, it was because he retained Calvin's unspeakable abhorrence of moral evil, and regarded the punishment of the reprobate, even though fore-ordained, as just. Man was so involved in the Fall, that, like Calvin, Carlyle was filled with wonder that any should be redeemed.

Carlyle's idea of God--based upon two simple tenets of faith: "God is great" and "God is good"--is typically Calvinistic. It

1. Frederick, ii, pp. 330,1. Italics mine.

might be reasonably maintained that these two declarations could be as easily attributed to any other theological tradition, were it not for the particular emphasis which Carlyle made of the absolutely inexorable character of God's greatness, and the dependence of everything upon His "decrees", to use Calvin's term.¹ God's "decrees" were His "laws", in Carlyle's terminology. It is man's subjection to them which gives his concept of duty such a deeply religious tinge, and fills his moral exhortations with such a spirit of urgency. It was this apparent similarity of the fatalism of Allah Akbar ("God is great") and Islam ("We must submit to God") with Calvinism's stress upon the Majesty of God, the authority of His laws, and the dependence of man, which drew him to Mohammedanism even more than the liberal desire to seek revelation in all religions. Submission to the "great deep Law of the World" is "the soul of Islam", he declared; "it is properly the soul of Christianity". Islam, indeed, was defined as "a confused form of Christianity".²

Carlyle is perhaps most a Calvinist in his social ethics. The doctrine of "working against Time", and the "intra-mundane asceticism" of his Calvinistic self-denial show the origins of his ethics clearly enough. It is not the place here to go into the relation between Calvinism's leading dogmas and the character of its morality, except to point out the dependence of the spirit of moral urgency upon the necessity of proving to one's self (and others) that one is foreordained to salvation (the certitudo

1. Institutes, III.xxi.5.

2. Heroes, pp.56,7.

salutis). "The Calvinist...creates his own salvation, or, as would be more correct, the conviction of it".¹ It is difficult for us today, to put ourselves in the mental atmosphere of the Puritan age when the prospects of the life after death were constantly present to men's minds. To them, life was but a small hourglass, and the sands of time ran quickly. Immediately ahead lay "death, judgment and eternity".

Behind the doctrine of work, in Carlyle, as it was in the great Puritan writers, was this sense of life's brevity and urgency, and a concomitant religious attitude toward time, with an abhorrence of idleness. The economy of time is primary, Carlyle noted in commenting on the young Frederick's early training. "...Every other noble economy will follow out of that". In Jeremy Taylor's Holy Living and Holy Dying, the very first section deals with the irreparableness of wasted time, and gives detailed precepts for using time profitably.²

1. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. by T. Parsons, London, 1930, p.115.
2. "God hath given to man a short time here upon earth, and yet upon this short time eternity depends... God hath given man work enough to do, that there should be no room for idleness... Idleness is the greatest prodigality in the world; it throws away that which is invaluable in respect of its present use, and irreparable when it is past, being to be recovered by no power of art or nature". (Chapter I, section 1, Works, new ed., London, 1850, vol. iii, pp. 9,10).
 Cf. also Richard Baxter's frequent admonitions concerning work: "Be wholly taken up in diligent business of your lawful callings when you are not exercised in the more immediate service of God". "Labour hard in your callings". "See that you have a calling which will find you employment for all the time which God's immediate service spareth". (From his Christian Directory, extracts in Works of the Puritan Divines, London, 1845-8, vol. i, pp. 336f.

Milton, reaching the age of twenty-three reminds himself in a sonnet, that he lives "ever in my great Taskmaster's eye", a line which Carlyle made peculiarly his own.¹ The God of Calvinism has often been caricatured as a kind of ubiquitous police-sergeant. In the face of the utter holiness and righteousness of God, this is as irrelevant as it is irreverent.² It occurred to no Calvinist ever to resent God's omnipresence. On the contrary, Carlyle, like the Puritans, accepts this as the proper way to view the relation of God and the world. He calls the world "God's Taskgarden, where whosoever is not working is begging or stealing".³ Man is responsible to God as to an Overseer, just as in matters of property, man is responsible to God as a tenant to a landlord.⁴

The virtue of perseverance⁵ is closely allied to work, being really the capacity to continue working without ceasing, defying discouragement. "Perseverance, I particularly respect", he wrote to his brother; "it is the very hinge of all virtues. On looking over the world the cause of nine parts in ten of the lamentable failures which occur in men's undertakings, and darken and degrade so much of their history, lies not in the want of

1. See Heroes, p.213, Past and Present, pp. 134, 207, 222, 225.

2. Calvin stresses how even the hidden evil desires of men are known to "God, whose eye nothing escapes" (Institutes II.viii. 6).

3. The French Revolution, i, p.144.

4. See Carlyle's view of national "property" or territory, treated *supra*, pp. 234f.

5. As work was the consequence of the quest for the certitudo salutis, perseverance was the consequence of the Calvinist's awareness of the need for continuing grace in the upholding of the elect, even after being "chosen". See Institutes IV. i. 21.

talents or the will to use them, but in the vacillating and desultory mode of using them, in flying from object to object, in starting away at each little disgust, and thus applying the force which might conquer any one difficulty to a series of difficulties so large that no human force can conquer them. The smallest brook on earth by continuing to run has hollowed out for itself a considerable valley to flow in. The wildest tempest overturns a few cottages, uproots a few trees, and leaves after a short space no mark behind it. Commend me, therefore, to the Dutch virtue of perseverance!¹ It was this quality of Dutch, or, for that matter, of Scotch, Calvinism which he admired. The best compliment he could pay to a hero was that he was a "much-enduring man".

It is well-known how the Calvinistic determination to create order,² which in the political sphere, issued in the theocratic theory, descended into all the "common" virtues of personal conduct. Carlyle's personal life exhibited a passion for ordering and disciplining every department of life. His cleanliness, frugality, moderation to the point of abstinence, and abhorrence of all self-indulgence were conspicuous qualities of his character. When his income was not guaranteed, he would say that "our only sure revenue must be the great one which Tullius speaks of by the name Parsimonia,-- meaning abstinence,

1. Froude, i, p. 148.

2. "Calvinism hated every species of disorder. It was simply the reassertion of a divine order amid the confused activities of the times--of the majesty, right, and only peacefulness of divine law" (J. Tulloch, Leaders of the Reformation, Boston, 1860, pp.172-4).

rigorous abnegation, Scotch thrift, in a word! Not so bad a vectigal after all. Really the Scotch are a meritorious people. They make wholesome pottage by boiling oatmeal in water; savoury soup of a singed sheep's head. They teach a poor man to understand that he is verily to live on bread and water, or even to die for want of bread and water, rather than beg, and be another's bondsman. They say with their rigorous stoicism, and Calvinism which is Hyper Stoicism: ἀπέχου, ἀπέχου, suffer, abstain; thou art here to abstain and endure! Honour to them, poor fellows. It is really the lesson which Destiny itself teaches every man, in the great inarticulate way, throughout this Life..."¹

Even after any threats to his economic security were eliminated, he maintained a rigorous frugality. Allingham tells of the time when, as an old man, walking along the streets of London, he picked up a bit of bread and put it on a ledge, saying that it was such a "waste of food".² The fare at Cheyne Row was always very plain, more for ascetic reasons than as an accommodation to his weak digestive system. Although he was not a teetotaler, he condemned the self-indulgence of the immoderate. Lamb and De Quincey, for instance, were judged severely. Carlyle even found it difficult to recognize their good qualities because of the profoundly moral basis of all his judgments of persons. He was "entirely against the use of any sort of sedative and anaesthetic drug. The smallest dose of an opiate made him feel poisoned. He held chloroform in surgical operations to be a

1. New Letters, i, p. 262.

2. Op.cit., p. 220.

mistake: 'the pain (is) a natural accompaniment and has its use'¹
 These attitudes were not personal eccentricities. They have been
 shown to be typical "Calvinist virtues".²

CONCLUSION.

This brief assembling of some of the points at which Carlyle's religious thought is closely related to Calvinism ends our study of the four main strains of his many-sided mind, and brings the whole of our investigation to a close, placing the final emphasis where it should be placed, on the power and effects of his "native religion". If there is one more point which needs stressing, it is that Carlyle's "silence" is the same in spirit as the warning given by Calvinism that, in the last analysis, God's Being is inscrutable, and the "reasons" for his "decrees" are incomprehensible.³ It is not necessary to place an exclusively mystical interpretation upon his doctrine of silence; it is as much indicative of a ready submission to the unknowable.

The fact that Carlyle outstripped Calvin in urging "silence" even before any theological inquiry began, has led many to suppose

1. Ibid., p. 218.

2. E.g., G. Harkness, John Calvin, the Man and his Ethics, New York, 1931.

3. Before he begins his discussion of the "divine decrees", Calvin issues a warning against "human curiosity, which no barriers can restrain from wandering into forbidden labyrinths, and soaring beyond its sphere, as if determined to leave none of the Divine secrets unscrutinized or unexplored...Let us, then, bear in mind, that to desire any other knowledge of predestination than what is unfolded in the word of God, indicates as great folly, as a wish to walk through impassable roads, or to see in the dark. Nor let us be ashamed to be ignorant of some things relative to a subject in which there is a kind of learned ignorance". (Institutes, III. xxi. 1,2).

that he was, at bottom, an agnostic. Although this is an insignia now worn with pride by rationalists who boast detachment and objectivity and want to fall into no "cant", Carlyle himself would have been the last to acknowledge such a title. To Froude he once compared the agnostic doctrines to what was "to appearance like the finest flour, from which you might expect the most excellent bread; but when you came to feed on it, you found it was powdered glass and you had been eating the deadliest poison".¹ If this study has shown anything, it ought to have shown that Carlyle is not an agnostic. He differs from all agnostics in his commitment to a faith that "the great soul of the world is just". The negativism and uncommitted character of agnostic thought repelled him. His own adaptation of the Goethean Wer dar Ihn nennen? is not the negativism of agnosticism, but the awe of the profoundly religious man. When he calls God the great "Unnameable" and "Unfathomable", we know that he does not mean God is beyond any knowledge at all. On the contrary, God's presence is the real "object" of his religious awareness. His Reality is positively named by calling Him the "Unnameable". In this, his expressions are in no way different from the best religious insights of the pious, among them his own favorite Job, who learned the secret of resignation to God's incomprehensible judgments. "I would seek God and unto God would I commit my cause: which doeth great things and unsearchable".²

If it is asked, What are the particular aspects of Carlyle's thought which are valuable for us today?, the answer usually

1. Froude, ii, p.216.

2. Job v. 8,9.

given is in the field of practical social problems and their ethical foundations. Contemporary socialist thinkers in Britain, today, for example, seem to be harking back to the 19th century "pioneers" of the socialist movement in the effort to relearn from them the ethical premisses that underlie their political faith and which today are endangered by moral relativism.

William Morris and John Ruskin are the subjects of fresh scholarship in this new quest. If Carlyle is not included with them, it is because of the temporary cloud which hangs over his name in the false association of his hero-worship with modern fascism. This cloud will evaporate when it is seen that the success of socialism depends upon more than the mere placing, in this century, of economic power in the hands of the people which, in the 19th century, received political power. The people themselves,-- although they, as the governed, must in no way yield up their right to replace incompetent and irresponsible ministers by democratic process,--are increasingly dependent upon the intelligence, the moral responsibility, and that indescribable third quality which inspires a large following, of a few leaders, who possess some over-all grasp of the needs of a complex technical society. Carlyle's hostility to the franchise must be disregarded as a non-essential attachment to his primary concern with worthy leadership, but this concern itself is today of even more fundamental importance than in his own. Our complex modern society is now apparently destined to be governed by bureaucrats and man's fate literally depends upon the moral calibre of these men.

In a realm that is deeper than the practical problem of

government, Carlyle has something even more important to say to a world that has been judged by two world wars. The tragedy of international anarchy, and the threat of western civilization's doom have forced inquiring minds to search for answers to the problem of the meaning of history. These answers are necessarily of a religious nature because human history is a spiritual "entity" only less great than the reality of God Himself.

Western culture has been too much influenced by the dynamic character of the Biblical view of history as God 's theatre of activity to fall back upon the classical attitude toward history as meaningless and material existence as fundamentally evil. But this dynamic view of history has in two modern theories become distorted into deifications of history itself: in the liberal theory of inevitable progress, and in the Marxian dialectic of the unalterable movement of history toward the communist state. The former theory has been discredited by the tragedy of contemporary events. The latter, though at the present day it threatens to engulf the world with its historical religion, is being resisted by all the resurgent spiritual forces of the West.

These two theories would not have been possible, had it not been for the obscuring, since the beginning of modern scepticism, of the subjection of human history to the authority of God. Modern man has had forced upon him the realization that he misjudged the severity and unalterable character of his Maker's Will. He has therefore rediscovered in many illuminating ways the judgment of God and the meaning of His wrath, expressed in historical events.

In theology, this has resulted in the reassertion of the divine transcendence of a judging God over history. In the philosophy of history, it has been expressed in such religious interpretations as that of Toynbee, who reminds us that the doom of civilizations is sounded when ethically and spiritually sterile man fails to meet the moral challenges flung at him by God.

To this new attentiveness to history as no longer self-explanatory, but dependent upon a higher authority, Carlyle has something to say. Since it became a subject of inquiry, there has been no other historian who has so emphatically asserted history to be the place where God's blessing and cursing are heard. He remarked to Froude that he would not have known what to think of God, had it not been for the French Revolution. Reading his works today, one has the strange sense that a prophet is speaking to our own distresses, and, falling under the same conviction, we realize that we too would not know what to think of God, had not we experienced the judgments we have endured and may yet be called on to endure.

APPENDIX ONE

CARLYLE AND PASCAL

It is extremely interesting that in 1822, among the articles written as pot-boilers for the Edinburgh Encyclopedia was one on Pascal. It is a fugitive piece missed by Carlyle's editors, and is to be found only in the Encyclopedia itself. Pascal's genius was, in respect to the contrast of mathematical with religious speculation, like Carlyle's. Reading the article today, it is interesting to note that Carlyle had a high estimation for Pascal's mathematical capacity and though he acknowledges his deep religious devotion and admires his unrealized ambition to create a Christian apologetic, he regards Pascal's involvement in the Jansenist controversy, and his denial of free will, as relatively unimportant reflections of the theological age he lived in. He, of course, refutes Voltaire's foolishness about Pascal being deranged, but is just as sceptical as any philosophe of Pascal's belief in the miraculous cure of his sister, and his ascetic habits. Yet in spite of this attitude, it seems reasonable to conjecture that Carlyle saw in Pascal the possibility of combining purely rational inquiry with religious inquiry, as he had not seen it before in any one thinker. He writes that Pascal was concerned "to show that the highest attainments in a science of strict reasoning were not incompatible with the humblest belief in the principles of religion." It is true that Pascal did not find a place in Carlyle's pantheon of intellectual heroes, and is rarely mentioned in his writings. Only Arnauld's protest, "Rest? rest? Shall I not have all Eternity to rest in?" (quoted in the article and again in Sartor, p.72) sank into the mind of the evangelist of work. But this is not to prove that Pascal did not contribute in a significant way to the cure of Carlyle's sceptical sickness, especially when we consider that the experience in Leith Walk probably occurred only a few weeks after his study in preparation for this article.¹

1. Cassirer (op.cit., p.202) observes that Carlyle expresses himself like Pascal, in Sartor-- "Man's Unhappiness comes of his Greatness", etc. Cf. supra, p.95.

APPENDIX TWO

FAUST, TEUFELSDRÖCKH, AND CARLYLE

For some reason, the editors of Carlyle have allowed to escape them an able and suggestive analysis of the problem of Goethe's Faust written as his second contribution to the critical reviews. It appeared in April, 1822 (about three months before the incident in Leith Walk) in the New Edinburgh Review, vol. II, pp.316-34. It has been reprinted but once, in a rare volume of Collectanea edited by Dr. Samuel A. Jones, Canton, Pa., 1903. Wilson (i, pp.237,8) asserts that the best of it was later incorporated in another essay on the second part of Faust ("Goethe's Helena" Essays, i, pp.146-97) published six years later, but close comparison shows this to be untrue. Because it is a mirror to Carlyle's own state of mind in 1822, and so remarkably accords with the sentiments of his letters and of Sartor, it seems worthwhile to reproduce liberal extracts from it, with parenthetical observations on its reflection of the writer's situation at the appropriate points. We recall what Carlyle told Irving about Faust in 1820. Having meditated upon the tragedy for two years, he was still able to call it "a great favourite".

"Faust was conceived while its author was passing from youth to settled manhood,-- a period of inquietude in every life,-- frequently, as in his case, of a darkness and despondency but too well suited to furnish ideas for such a work." (Carlyle was writing this while in the period of the "Everlasting No".) "...It's object is to delineate whatever is wildest and most mysterious in the heart and intellect of man... In perusing it we seem to behold the troubled chaos of one's own early woes, and doubts, and wanderings... In studying the scenes of Faust, we incessantly discover marks of that singular union of enthusiasm with derision; of volatility with strength and fervour; of impetuous passion, now breaking out in fiery indignation, now in melting tenderness, now in withering sarcasm, with an overflowing gaiety, not only sportive and full of the richest humour, but grotesque to the very borders of absurdity, or beyond them,-- which appear to belong exclusively to Goethe." (Not for long! What could be a better description of the form in which Sartor was to appear?)

Carlyle then compares Marlowe's play adversely with Goethe's. In the former Faust is a mere sensualist. (This was never Carlyle's problem. The "pleasure" he abjures in the "Everlasting Yea" is that aimed at by the intellect, not the body.)

"Faust's misery (does not) at any period of his history spring from so common a source as the dread of his future doom; 'this sun shines on all his sorrows', and it would hardly alleviate them perceptibly if the hereafter were to be for him an everlasting blank." (For Carlyle, likewise, though there is an

an absorption with death, it produces not a sense of personal judgment, but a consciousness of life's brevity.)

"In early life, Faust has entered upon the search of truth with the fearlessness natural to his ardent temper, solicited by such an object; spurning those consecrated barriers which though they tend to repress the freedom of thought, often serve also to concentrate its exertions and thereby increase its results-- he has attempted to penetrate the most secret recesses of physical and mental nature; he has now examined all, and nowhere found one satisfactory conclusion." (This perfectly characterizes the young Carlyle, from Annan (see *supra*, pp.43f) onward.) "From each keener effort to divine the essence of things, his mind has turned back more faint and full of doubt:" (Carlyle remembers Pascal's cry, "My God, enlighten my soul or take from it this reasoning curiosity!" (see *supra*, p.69).) "and when philosophy in all its departments is explored to the utmost limits of human research, Faust finds himself as ignorant as at the outset." (Carlyle's reaction to metaphysical inquiry in 1815, when it seemed that a philosopher he had been reading was able only

'To weave fine cobwebs, fit for skull,
That's empty, when the moon is full' ¹

(see Conway, *op.cit.*, pp.162,3), did not ever change.) "Words will not satisfy him, and of real existences he cannot gain knowledge. There are no first indubitable principles to guide him; and still the universe, study it as he may, appears before him a dark entangled riddle, the meaning of which, if it have any, is impenetrably hid from men. Nor is it to know only that he strives; the sensibilities of his heart have been embarked in this undertaking as well as the faculties of his intellect-- he would feel as well as understand; and he cherishes vague and vehement longings for some unspeakable communion with the great power of nature, whose magnificence expands his soul," (See *supra*, p.69, for Teufelsdröckh's mystical response to nature.) "while their mysteriousness confounds and repels it.

"Faust's natural and acquired endowments are high, but his ideas of excellence are vastly higher. All that he can appears as nothing in comparison of what he should;" (See *supra*, pp.vff, for Carlyle's sense of mission, his idea of "literary priesthood".) "and this enormous disproportion between what he is and what he aims with such intense volition to become, forms a never-failing source of agitation to his mind. He has gifts which would bear him forward triumphantly to the acquisition of every thing that man is permitted to acquire; but all will not satisfy, if he cannot overstep the limits with which nature itself has circumscribed him.

"Meanwhile, those secluded struggles, in which the flower of his days is already spent, have estranged him from the cheerful ways of men;" (Teufelsdröckh almost forgot that the men and women around him were alive (see *supra*, p.82). Carlyle feared that he had "alienated by my misery certain of my friends.") "...friendship and love, and worldly preferment,

1. Butler's Hudibras.

have alike been sacrificed at the shrine of science; and science has requited him with vain delusions and baseless chimeras. The spirit which longed to mingle with the cherubim and explore the darkest arcana of the universe, is shut up within the narrow cell of a college and reduced to conduct a few boys through the juggling sophistry of scholastic learning." (Carlyle frequently expressed his impatience with tutoring.)

"Faust abandons himself to utter despair-- he has no longer any object upon earth, and still no rest." (The "Unrest" of Teufelsdröckh is stressed in Sartor.) "The sources of his feeling are changed into sources of self-torment; the acuteness of his sensibility, and the force of his will, serve only to augment his sufferings; his superhuman attainments lift him above human sympathy; he envies the sluggish happiness of those around him..."

"In this tumultuous agony, his eye lights on a phial of poison, and one lurid ray of joy breaks in upon him, as he determines on self-murder. There is a stern pathos, a wild grandeur in the feelings with which he surveys this undisputed proof of human knowledge...by which the pangs of humanity are to be quieted at once and forever. The lofty hopes of another world dawn upon him... The stream of life is carrying him nearer and nearer to the great ocean... He knows the fearful risk, but there is no alternative... The cup into which he has poured the poison recalls to memory his father's house, and the festive nights in which a different use was made of this old relic. At this instant, the choir assembled in the neighboring church to celebrate the Easter Festival, commence their hymn in worship of the Saviour. It's simple tones, and the solemn warning which the words address to mortals, toiling in this vale of tears, arrest the hand of the suicide; the remembrance of many happy days of pious childhood breaks through that of the agitated and unhallowed scenes which have succeeded; his sacred and tortured heart is melted into natural feeling; 'tears flow; the earth has back her son'." (See *supra*, pp.84f.)

Faust now goes out among men (see *supra*, p.77, for Carlyle's feeling in 1819 that he must "mingle in the busy current which is flowing past me"), but he does not lose his despair. He turns everywhere for comfort, determines upon studying and translating the New Testament, but gets stuck at "In the beginning was the Word", which he cannot comprehend. Then, Mephistopheles appears and counsels him to go into the real world, stop his speculations, enjoy real pleasures. Faust, remembering what he has suffered, to no purpose, curses life. Carlyle appends a good translation into blank verse of this curse, which may be favorably compared with another rimed version of the same year, printed in the Love Letters (ii, p.351).¹

1. If we ask why Carlyle took the trouble to translate only this part of the play, the answer is in a retrospective letter to Goethe (1827) in which he described his spiritual struggles and thanked him for his guidance. "Faust's

"Tho' from my heart's wild tempest
 A sweet remember'd tone recovered me,
 And all my youth's remaining hopes responded
 With the soft echo of joys long gone by,
 Yet do I curse them all--all--all that captivates
 The soul with juggling witchery, and with false
 And flattering spells into (this) den of grief
 Lures it, and binds it there. Accursed be
 All the proud thoughts with which man learns to pamper
 His haughty spirit-- cursed be the sweet
 Entrancing phantoms which delude our senses--
 Cursed the dreams which lure us to the search
 Of fame and reputation-- cursed all
 Of which we glory in the vain possession,
 Children and wife, and slave and plough-- accursed
 Be Mammon, when with rich and glittering heaps
 He tempts us to bold deeds, or when he smooths
 The pillow of inglorious dalliance--
 Accursed be the grape's enticing juice--
 Cursed be love, and hope, and faith-- and cursed
 Above all cursed be the tame dull spirit
 Which bears life's evils patiently!"

Carlyle's superb analysis of the character of Mephistopheles follows. "In many respects, Mephistopheles resembles some French philosophe of the last century. There is the perfection of the intellectual faculties with a total absence of the moral. 'It is written on his front that he never loved a living soul.'...

"It was himself (Faust) still more than his circumstances that required change: the wildness of his desires still more than the scantiness of their gratification produced his misery." (This was an anticipation of the problem of finitude and happiness dealt with in Sartor (see supra, pp.93ff).) "Accordingly he traverses 'the bustling inanity of life...'; he loses his dignity without finding peace."

Mephistopheles tells Faust "the search for truth is like 'thrashing straw', it leads to no result; and those ambitious aspirations serve only to make the fool, who entertains them, no better than 'a beast driven about by an evil spirit within a circle of withered heath, while green pastures lie all around it'."

Concluding the synopsis, after describing the moving scene between Faust and the insane Margarete, Carlyle observes, "The work is undoubtedly one of the most singular that have ever appeared in Europe." On the opening scenes, he says, "They give us the most vivid picture we have seen of a species

wild curse seemed the only fit greeting for human life; and his passionate Fluch vor allen der Geduld! was spoken from my very inmost heart." (Correspondence between Goethe and Carlyle, edited by C.E. Norton, London, 1887, pp.30ff.)

of mental convulsion, at once in the extreme degree moving and difficult to paint. It is the destruction of a noble spirit by the force of its own thoughts; a suicide of the mind, far more tragical than that of the body. Faust interests us deeply at first; he is at the utmost pitch of misery, and has no feeling of self-accusation; he possesses all the grandest attributes of our nature, and has meant to use them well. His fault seems but the want of worldly wisdom, and the lofty though unhappy constitution of his mind; he has been born with the head of a sceptic and the heart of a devotee; in grasping at the sublime he has lost even the useful... The sleepless agitation, the arid tearless wretchedness, natural to a human being so situated, have been delineated by Goethe with a beauty and verisimilitude to which there are few parallels, even in easier subjects...

"Faust's crimes are many, but his will seems to have had little share in them: even after his connection with the fiend, he feels virtuously, even nobly, though he acts ill; and, when we see Mephistopheles at length succeed in ruining a being so greatly his superior in all respects it seems as if the spirit of evil were made victorious over that of good, the lower part of man's nature over the higher. But if such be our feeling, it is not with the poet that we must quarrel. 'The soul that sinneth, it shall die' is the law of nature as well as of revelation;" (Carlyle's whole interpretation of history was that it was an arena of rewards and punishments.) "and acts of desperate rashness, though without any purpose morally bad in the author of them, as they produce fatal consequences to the individual or to others, must be punished accordingly. Faust's criminality existed long before he forsook his retirement, or addicted himself to the converse of spirits; it began when he allowed his desires to reach beyond the boundaries wherewith nature had circumscribed them, when he allowed his mind to wander-- even in the search of truth-- till it doubted the existence of a Providence, and the foundation of moral distinctions." (Teufelsdröckh cries, "Is there no God, then?...Has the word Duty no meaning?" (see supra, p.72)) "All his subsequent miseries and crimes originated in this-- at first view, so pardonable a transgression."

Here Carlyle did seem to grasp the dangerous pretensions of the truth-seeker's particular idolatry (see supra, pp.78ff). It was easier to detect in Goethe's delineation than in himself!

It is significant that in six years, having discovered peace at Hoddam Hill, Carlyle was able to approach Faust with even greater understanding. It is certainly an added insight, not possessed in 1822, that we see in "Goethe's Helena" (Essays, i, p.160): "Pride, and an entire uncompromising though secret love of self, are still the mainsprings of his conduct. Knowledge with him is precious only because it is power; even virtue he would love chiefly as a finer sort of sensuality, and because it was his virtue." In 1822, Carlyle saw Faust as a man who permitted himself to ask unpermitted questions. In 1828, having experienced "annihilation of self", he saw him from a genuinely Christian perspective, as a man who could use even knowledge and virtue to nourish his self-idolatry.

APPENDIX THREE.

IGDRASIL.

Buried in a short-lived periodical, Igdrasil, (London, vol. I, No. 2, February, 1890) is a publication of a virtually unknown MS. of Carlyle's entitled Igdrasil, From the Norse.

The private owner of the MS. gives an introductory note:

"Although the title infers it to be a translation, the language and ideas it contains appear to me sufficient to stamp it as Carlyle's original work". Since it is an unusually beautiful expression of his poetic view of the vital unity of history, it seems worthwhile to transcribe it here, particularly since it appears to be a fugitive piece not known to the editors and critics.

"O Tree of Igdrasil, deep-rooted down in Hela's death-realms. Whose boughs fill all Immensity and reach to Heaven. Tree of Existence, ever-growing, ever-dying; mounting out of deep Death-Kingdoms and deciduous returning thither; old, oldest, yet ever new; another, yet the same. From the fates at Mimer's well, deep watering thy lowest roots, to me thy outmost leaf, one of thy million million leaves!

"Who shall express in human numbers, in words of Man, thy many-voiced unfathomable music, storm-toned, which is the speech of gods? From of old thou wert; in the beginning of the morning; when Being first was. Lo, I, I am of yesterday, and pass swiftly; how shall I speak or sing?

"Can I read this Picture-writing: written letter to us from the gods? O Earth, thou Earth, my godlike Mother, what art thou who in such sort seemest--green-mantled, rock-crowned, necklaced with diamond-glancing streams? To me, O divine Mother, to me thou speakest: how shall I dare to comprehend thee?

"Comprehend the incomprehensible? Mark down in music-notes the great song of Thunder and the Tempests? What Human History, and the storm of Nations in their Paroxysm means? O Tree of existence, wide-waving are thy boughs; all wild-sounding, ever onwards, out of old Eternity; and all man's speech is little, is dumb or nothing!

"We will sit by the Tombs of our Fathers; we will sit silent, looking up at the firmament of Heaven. Silent: for what word is there? Silent they sleep there; their over-wearied dust reposing; fruit that the Life-tree of Immensity has dropped. They have done their speaking, their working, and enduring, and the sound they made is done; part of Human History in Eternity unchangeable as the highest God.

"O Father, O our Father, that were alive in love and sorrow and sore labour even as we! Deep now is such rest, most deep. The stars also rest. Loud are many things, and pass swiftly; but silent, changeless are these now: the divine stars above us, the divine sepulchres below. Eternal Stars, Eternal Spirits of our Loved ones, all hail in silence, fit word of Salutation there is none.

"And yet arise, O soul; to speak also is thy Task. Unnumbered harmonies quiver through that tempest-tone of Igdrasil; like lightning streaks in the black of Thunder--as beautiful as they, as terrible as they. Canst thou not snatch a unison with some of them? Come, venture, dare,--thy voice too becomes eternal, part of Igdrasil, and of the stars and graves, and all memories of the gods".

The similarity of some of Carlyle's phrasing here to the passage in Heroes (see supra, chapter 7) suggests that this was a written meditation used as the basis for his remarks in the lecture. It is certainly a private meditation, and in it we see Carlyle considering the deeply religious symbolism of human history, and reflecting on the meaning of his destiny as a historian.¹

1. See Mallet, Northern Antiquities, trans. from the French by Percy, new ed. London, 1847. (Bohn's Antiquarian's Library), pp. 410-13.

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